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### THE AMBIGUOUS IMAGE

Francis Haskell

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith

## RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

This interview is sealed and will not be available for public access until after the death of the interviewee and his wife, Frances Salmon Haskell. Should the death of the interviewee and his wife occur prior to January 1, 2010, certain portions of the transcript will be sealed and will not be available for public access until that date.

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Art History Oral Documentation Project

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Frontispiece: Francis Haskell, Turkey, circa 1945. Photograph courtesy of Francis Haskell.

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Frontispiece: Francis Haskell, Tuscany, circa 1985. Photograph courtesy of Francis Haskell.



## CONTENTS

Curriculum Vitae .....	xv
------------------------	----

### **SESSION ONE: 21 APRIL, 1994 (60 minutes)**

TAPE I, SIDE ONE .....	1
------------------------	---

Father, Arnold Haskell, ballet critic and director of Royal Ballet School — Mother, Vera Saitzoff, Russian émigré — French was primary language spoken at home during early childhood — Father's family was in banking — Mother's family background in Russia — Summer holidays always spent in France — Outbreak of World War II and escape home from France — Visiting an exhibition of the Michael Sadler collection — Father's interest in contemporary painting — Siblings' interests and professional careers — Family was Jewish, but did not observe faith — Father and brother converted to Catholicism — Haskell's education at Eton College — Pervasive climate of anti-Semitism at Eton — Evacuation during war — Celebrating the Labour victory of 1945 — Postwar hardships — Military service in army — Stay in Paris after completing military service in 1948.

TAPE I, SIDE TWO .....	21
------------------------	----

Life in Paris — Living in Montparnasse and visiting painters' studios — Haskell purchases a painting by Armand Guillaumin — Attending the theater and the ballet in Paris — Entry into King's College, Cambridge — No idea that he would ever study art history.

### **SESSION TWO: 22 APRIL , 1994 (195 minutes)**

TAPE II, SIDE ONE .....	26
-------------------------	----

More recollections of life during World War II — Restrictions of everyday life — Friends and intellectual awakening at King's College — Teachers in English history and literature — Peer group in Cambridge continues to meet — George Rylands as mentor — Noel





Annan — E. M. Forster the single most important influence on Haskell during his life at Cambridge — Liberalism as an absolute value — Forster on Roger Fry — An education that made students extraordinarily self-centered — No interest in anything related to the twentieth century — Formulation of career goals — Meeting Nikolaus Pevsner — Haskell wins fellowship from King's, but with stipulation that he must study abroad — Pevsner's suggestion to study Jesuit art in Italy — Archival research in Rome — Haskell's realization that there was no such thing as "Jesuit art" — Haskell's dissertation on seventeenth-century art in Jesuit churches — Return to England and a job as a research librarian in the House of Commons, 1953–1954 — Appointed a research fellow at King's College in 1954 — Translates book by Franco Venturi — Expansion of dissertation into *Patrons and Painters* — Haskell is made librarian of King's College art history department in 1962 — Teaching art history courses for undergraduates — No formal training in art history — Anthony Blunt and the Courtauld Institute — Haskell contrasts his training with Courtauld approach — Developing historical side over connoisseurship.

TAPE II, SIDE TWO ..... 49

The Warburg Institute in the mid-1950s — Haskell is self-educated in formal analysis, but seldom applies such analyses in his own work — Readings in iconography — A reaction against Erwin Panofsky's iconological premises — Doubts that Renaissance painters were influenced profoundly by philosophy — Haskell's student at Oxford, Charles Hope, argued that Titian was not working from a neo-Platonist foundation — Haskell's philosophy of history — Readings in English history — Importance of Lewis Namier as a model for professional history — Jacob Burckhardt is Haskell's most important model for art history — Suspicious of theoretical approaches to history — Investigating the "'Rankean question' of what actually did happen" — Critique of Marxist- and Freudian-influenced history — Historical investigation as a corrective to philosophical speculation — Readings in Freud — The radical change in English social life that occurred in the 1950s — The sudden, unexpected importance that contemporary developments in the United States assumed in English intellectual life — Changes in the Cambridge student population in the 1950s and 1960s — Haskell's lack of interest in existentialism — His





strong preference for nineteenth-century historical writing — Quentin Skinner and changes in history fellows at Cambridge — Introduction to discursive analysis — Antipathy to the work of F. R. Leavis — A sense of isolation both as an art historian and as a general historian — Many friends, but no one with whom he exchanged ideas on the research topics of closest interest to him — Benedict Nicolson and the *Burlington Magazine* — Encounter with Bernard Berenson — E. H. Gombrich — Haskell's community of scholars in Italy and their lack of interest in his patronage studies — The Longhi-Venturi feud — Most art historians in Italy still focused on connoisseurship and problems of attribution — Alessandro Marabottini Marabotti — Franco Venturi — Federico Zeri — Paola Barocchi's appreciation of Haskell's work — Centrality of Marxist political categories to Italian art history — Haskell's agnostic politics left him indifferent to the political ramifications of much Italian art-historical writing — Comparing post-1945 British and Italian art history.

TAPE III, SIDE ONE ..... 72

Haskell's introduction to the Warburg Institute and its community of scholars — Importance of Warburg Institute to Haskell's intellectual development — Indirect influence of the German intellectual tradition — On antiquarian traditions in English art history — Arnaldo Momigliano — Impressions of Kenneth Clark, Frances Yates, and John Summerson — Critique of Longhian approach that perceives old masters as "anticipating" the modernist avant-garde — A painful meeting with Meyer Schapiro — Historical revisionism in the 1950s and 1960s — Revisionism as an act of continuity with older traditions that had momentarily fallen in disfavor — Benedetto Croce — Antonio Gramsci — Meeting André Chastel — Initial mutual hostility replaced by a close friendship — More on George Rylands — Hugh Honour as an influence — Ellis Waterhouse showing Haskell obscure churches in Rome — Discussions at Benedict Nicolson's London club — Nicolson's strengths as an editor.

TAPE III, SIDE TWO ..... 95

On the Marxist view of patronage studies — Frederick Antal — Studying individual patrons, not a class — Haskell compares his work with other patronage studies — The selection of an individual to



discuss begins to articulate an idea — Patronage as a way of entering  
 the intellectual life of a past era — Opposition to connoisseurship —  
 The eye is never enough for art *history* — Learning to read documents  
 — *Patrons and Painters* provided a key that would be useful in future  
 work — Reconstructing research steps in *Patrons and Painters* —  
 Difficulties of working in the Jesuit archives — Uncovering the  
 mechanics of how paintings were commissioned and then donated for  
 public exhibition — Beginnings of interest in nineteenth-century  
 French bourgeois art — Work on Benjamin Altman — Phases of  
 English collecting fashions since 1689 — The relation of taste to  
 geopolitical situations — More on life in Cambridge in the 1950s — A  
 hesitant welcome for women in Cambridge intellectual circles —  
 Meeting Americans at Cambridge — Friendship with George Plimpton  
 — Increase of students from working- and lower-middle-class  
 backgrounds — E. M. Forster's concern that lower-class men feel  
 welcome — Sexual attitudes at Cambridge — Very unusual then for  
 college men to have regular girl friends — The Apostles, secret society  
 for discussion of political and ethical questions — Haskell elected to  
 the Apostles in 1954.

TAPE IV, SIDE ONE ..... 118

More on the Apostles — Readings in Greek classical philosophy —  
 Not much interest or knowledge among the Apostles of German  
 philosophy — Importance of empiricist and common-sense thinking —  
 A strongly shared belief that progress depended on a natural  
 aristocracy separating itself from commercial life — Types of  
 questions discussed at Apostles meetings — Saying what was on your  
 mind considered vital to intellectual life, regardless of the effects one's  
 words might have on other people — Total honesty and lack of  
 common courtesy possible only in the homogeneous society that  
 constituted English universities before the 1950s — Haskell relates the  
 relative isolation of the German émigrés from the liveliest sectors of  
 English intellectual life to the close-knit bonds formed at Oxford and  
 Cambridge — Cambridge group looked down upon men who married  
 as people who had betrayed an ideal of serving truth first and  
 foremost.





**SESSION THREE: 23 APRIL, 1994 (210 minutes)**

**TAPE V, SIDE ONE ..... 128**

Appointment as Professor of History of Art at Oxford University in 1967 — Differences between art history programs at Oxford and Cambridge at the time — Working to expand art history education at Oxford by including it in the secondary examinations — Developing a postgraduate diploma — Relation of the Department of the History of Art to the Ashmolean Museum — Courses taught by the Ashmolean staff — Haskell's limited involvement in planning Ashmolean exhibitions — Differences in intellectual life at Oxford and Cambridge — Developing an intellectual community at Oxford — Friendship with Jean Seznec — Bringing Otto Kurz to Oxford as Slade Professor — Ernst Kitzinger — On the selection of the Slade Professors — Necessity at Oxford for interdisciplinary approach to art history — Developing courses in collaboration with other departments — Origins of *Rediscoveries in Art* — Haskell's lectures orient themselves around current writing projects — Current research on dispersal of Charles I's art collection by Commonwealth government — Changes in student attitudes at Oxford since 1967 — Attendance at lectures has dropped considerably, while demand for seminars has increased — Development of a student art history society which also sponsors lectures — Relation of Haskell's lecture courses to undergraduate history examinations — Growing importance of private fund-raising for all Oxford programs — Research students have tended to focus on social and intellectual history of art, rather than stylistic or iconographical analysis — Organization of student research projects and Haskell's daily interaction with his students — American students demand more time from their professors than British or European students.

**TAPE V, SIDE TWO ..... 150**

Handling formal analysis in the Oxford approach to art history — Haskell seldom works with students interested in twentieth-century art — Haskell's research into pre-1914 modernism for *History and Its Images* — Classes on nineteenth-century French art central to departmental offerings — On the move away from the art object during the last twenty years — Current student reaction to the views



of T.J. Clark — Works occasionally with feminist students on joint projects with history or literature — Discusses a student thesis on illustrations in nineteenth-century history books — Another thesis on nineteenth-century French representations of the Middle East — Student unrest at Oxford in 1968 — On the rise of interest in structuralism and poststructuralism among students and colleagues — Griselda Pollock was Haskell's first undergraduate pupil at Oxford — Haskell's lack of interest in contemporary theory — Antagonism to work of Michel Foucault — More on student Charles Hope's work on Titian and his critique of Panofsky's iconographical approach — Standards for evaluating student research projects — Student Gerard Vaughan's work on eighteenth-century English collectors of ancient sculpture revolutionized understanding of topic — Need for historical scholars to separate themselves from contemporary tastes and intellectual fashions — The ideas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians are as interesting as those of anybody writing today — Gibbon as one of Haskell's intellectual mentors — The lessons Haskell draws from the decline of the authority once given to Freud and Marx.

TAPE VI, SIDE ONE ..... 171

On the sociology of art — Development of Haskell's ideas on the structure of patronage — Gombrich's response to *Patrons and Painters* — Accepting the relativity and mutability of taste — More on Haskell's study of nineteenth-century French academic art — Learning to see the value of Couture, Bouguereau, and Gérôme — The myth of the undiscovered genius and its relation to the development of the modernist orthodoxy — The modern art orthodoxy much stronger in the U.S. than in Britain — On the Museum of Modern Art — More on Meyer Schapiro — Comparing Schapiro and Gombrich — The continuing influence of E. M. Forster on Haskell has helped separate him from attachments to art- historical camps — Haskell's publications on Géricault, and the English grand tours — The dangers of publishers' demands for coffee table books — *Rediscoveries in Art* emerged partly as a result of prior work on nineteenth-century French academic art — The Wrightsman Lectures.





TAPE VI, SIDE TWO ..... 193

More on French academic artists, and the current popularity of Bouguereau — Jon Whiteley's thesis on the neo-Grecs — Haskell now less interested in academic art — Critique of use of academic art to attack modern art orthodoxy — Albert Boime — Haskell does not believe that all images are of equal value or that all images represent overarching structures of power — Gombrich's hostile reaction to *Rediscoveries in Art* — The pervasive role of ideology in contemporary art history — Survey of Haskell's general cultural tastes: Braque and Matisse, post-1945 film, admiration for W.H. Auden, interest in modern museum architecture and love for work of Louis Kahn — On the social revolution that swept Britain after World War II — The importance of maintaining stable values that transcend immediate social contexts — The continuing relevance of John Ruskin's and William Morris's utopian ideals — A decline of a living cultural heritage in political life, both right and left — Effects on museums in Britain of commercialization of culture — Development of *Taste and the Antique* — On working in collaboration with Nicholas Penny — *The Painful Birth of the Art Book* — Contest of historical and philosophical approaches to the past during the late eighteenth century still an issue relevant for today — Haskell's decision to tackle the subject of historical skepticism — Not trying to deride previous historians as victims of their ideologies.

TAPE VII, SIDE ONE ..... 214

*History and Its Images* and its relation to the "new art history" concerned with the social functions of art objects — The degree to which the book reflects purely art-historical concerns — Comparison with Simon Schama's *Embarrassment of Riches* — The art object is not simply a social construction — Haskell's decision to read only primary sources in researching *History and Its Images* — Gibbon, Michelet, and Huizinga as models for contemporary historians — The goal of uncovering explanations for the intellectual and emotional responses images stimulate — Art as evidence for the relationship of individual psychology to social structure — Example of Botticelli's reputation in England as a specific problem in the history of taste.



**SESSION FOUR: 24 APRIL, 1994 (180 minutes)**

**TAPE VIII, SIDE ONE . . . . . 225**

Haskell's reflections on the idiosyncratic nature of his historical project — Questions whether relative isolation and indifference to contemporary theory are evidence of intellectual weakness — Historians Haskell most admires were also relatively isolated and indifferent to contemporary intellectual fashions — Reflections on the model established by Jacob Burckhardt — Aby Warburg as another model of intellectual integrity — On Henry Thomas Buckle's historical work and its limitations — John Stuart Mill — Cambridge offered no training for working in archives — Focus of King's College was reading literature and thinking about big issues — More on development of interest in art history as an undergraduate — More on discussions with Pevsner — The example of Michael Jaffe as an older classmate who had pursued studies in art history — King's College support for Haskell's research interests — Participation in the undergraduate history society at Cambridge — Noel Annan's lectures on nineteenth-century English thought — Importance of acknowledging the political and social context of art without rejecting the art itself — Rudolf Wittkower as a personal friend and scholarly influence.

**TAPE VIII, SIDE TWO . . . . . 245**

A meal with Millard Meiss at the Institute for Advanced Study — The Wittkowers' enjoyment of good food and good gossip not typical of Warburgians — Edgar Wind as a scholar and personality — Otto Kurz — Leopold Ettlinger — The Wittkowers' move to the U.S. and its effect on British art history — The influence of *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* — On Wittkower's intellectual integrity — On historicism — Alois Riegl's theories described as an effort to take the art object out of history.

**TAPE IX, SIDE ONE . . . . . 267**

Art as a substitute for religion — Gombrich's hierarchy of artists as representatives of eternal values — *Rediscoveries in Art* as homage and challenge to the ideal that art could carry eternal values — In





*History and Its Images* objects remain unknowable but exist only within history — More on Lewis Namier as a model for how history should be written — On Collingwood and Croce — Changes in educational structures at Oxford since 1967 — Continuing priority given to individual mentoring — Haskell's organization of seminars — Student project to accumulate a bibliography of French nineteenth-century art criticism — Student interests, seminar topics, and examination requirements — Impact of expansion of art history education on British museums — Haskell's responsibilities as a trustee of the Wallace Collection — Involvement as an adviser to museums — No time to become closely involved in life of Trinity College — More on the Apostles — Hugh Honour — Francis Watson — Meeting Larissa Salmina during the Venice Biennale in 1962.

TAPE IX, SIDE TWO ..... 289

More on meeting Larissa Salmina — Courtship and marriage — Political and legal difficulties in marrying a Soviet citizen — Salmina's education and work on Italian old master drawings — Art history in Leningrad — The Hermitage — Salmina's career after moving to Britain — Shift of emphasis to Russian prints and drawings.

**SESSION FIVE: 25 APRIL, 1994 (110 minutes)**

TAPE X, SIDE ONE ..... 310

Some of Haskell's students discussed: Jon Whiteley, Gerard Vaughan, Charles Hope, Tim Wilkes, Richard Wrigley, Iain Pears, Neil McWilliam, and Colin Bailey — Salon criticism as theme linking Haskell's classes for past decade — Changes in publishers of art history books since the 1950s — Effects on publication of student theses — Haskell's involvement in placing graduates — Increasing difficulty in finding good jobs for students — Contrasting U.S. and British letters of recommendation — Involvement in American tenure review process — More on working with publishers — Peter Calvocoressi and the publication of *Patrons and Painters* — John Nicoll and the London office of Yale University Press — Illustrations as an issue in planning art history books — Working with Gillian Malpass on illustrations for *History and Its Images* — Plans to teach at



the University of Chicago after retirement from Oxford — More on advising museums — Opinion that writing on twentieth-century patronage is probably still impossible — More on André Chastel and his influence on French art history — Haskell's work as an adviser on planning for a new art history institute to be located in the old Bibliothèque Nationale — André Malraux and "le musée imaginaire" — Haskell's connections to British periodicals — Book reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* — Chair of editorial board for the *Burlington Magazine*.

TAPE X, SIDE TWO ..... 331

On working with Benedict Nicolson — The pressures potential advertisers put on art historical-journals to run articles that complement upcoming exhibitions — Haskell's first publication in the *Burlington* in the 1950s — Haskell's daily writing schedule — Research methods — Approach to revisions — Planning, drafting, and research — Haskell has to write a first draft before beginning archival research so that an argument directs his examination of the facts — Intuition more important than logic in first development of an argument — The role of the art historian in shaping public discussion of visual culture — Defining the contemporary "public" for visual culture — Art history should expand beyond fine art objects to the study of the entire visual environment — Discussion with Joseph Alsop and Isaiah Berlin on the role visual materials play in contemporary thought — More on dispersal of Charles I's collections by the Commonwealth government — The first time those outside the highest levels of aristocracy took an interest in great painting — Haskell's growing interest in Islamic art — Rethinking how art fits into history remains Haskell's primary project — Responding to criticism that his work is anti-intellectual — Committed to the principle that contemporary standards should not be used to judge people and events in the past.

TAPE XI, SIDE ONE ..... 352

More on the prevailing tendency to emphasize the abstractionist elements in pre-twentieth-century art — Critique of the "new art history" as antihistorical — Committed to giving terms more precisely historicized moorings — The example of the "avant-garde" as a term





that has caused perennial confusion within art history.

Index .....	358
-------------	-----

Richard Cándida Smith, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Michigan, interviewed Francis Haskell at his office at the Department of the History of Art, Oxford University (Sessions One, Two, Four and Five) and at his home in Oxford, England (Session Three). A total of 12.6 hours were recorded. The transcript was edited by Katherine P. Smith.



## CURRICULUM VITAE

Francis Haskell

Professor of the History of Art, University of Oxford 1967–1995

Born April 7, 1928, London, England

Educated at Eton college and King's College, Cambridge. Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, 1954–1967. Librarian of the Fine Arts Faculty, Cambridge University, 1962–1967. Honorary Fellow of King's College, 1986.

Married Larissa Salmina in 1965.

Fellow of the British Academy since 1971; Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1979; Corresponding Member of the Accademia Pontaniana, Naples, since 1982 and of Ateneo Veneto since 1986; Honorary Member of the Accademia Clementina of Bologna since 1990; Honorary Fellow of Freie Universität Berlin, 1993; Trustee of the Wallace Collection since 1976; Serena Medal for Italian Studies, British Academy, 1985; Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, 1990.

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### Principal Books

*Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque.* London: Chatto and Windus, 1963. Italian, Spanish, and French editions.

*Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976. Italian and French editions.

(With Nicholas Penny) *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981. Italian, French, and Spanish editions.

*Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected Essays.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987. French, Italian, Spanish, and German editions.





*The Painful Birth of the Art Book.* New York: Thames and Hudson, c. 1987. Italian, French, Spanish, and German editions.

*History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past.* New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1993. Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Dutch editions forthcoming.



SESSION ONE: 21 APRIL, 1994

[Tape I, Side One]

SMITH: The first question we have been starting with is the simplest one.

When and where were you born?

HASKELL: I was born in London, at home, on April 7, 1928.

SMITH: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents?

HASKELL: My father [Arnold Haskell] was a ballet critic. He was also very keen on art and knew quite a number of artists. My mother [Vera Saitzoff Haskell] was a Russian émigré. They met in Paris, where so many émigrés used to live at that time, in the twenties. Their common language when I was born was French more than English. In later years my mother spoke English all the time with us, but during my very early childhood I probably heard more French spoken than English. I've always read and spoken French without any problem, and I think it dated from then.

SMITH: Where in London did you live?

HASKELL: We were born in a house that was subsequently destroyed by German V-1 bombs, in Kensington, on Hornton Street, which is off Kensington High Street. It was, I suppose, a fairly standard, middle-class sort of area.

SMITH: You said your father was interested in the ballet, but what was his occupation?





HASKELL: You might well ask that. He wrote books which sold well, and that was an occupation, and later in life he became director of the Royal Ballet School in London—this was much later in life, just after the war. At that stage I suppose he could be described as a free-lance writer. His father had been a banker. [My grandfather] died in the mid-thirties, when I was about seven or eight. He was always worried that he was going to be bankrupt and would have nothing, but he was quite reasonably well off. My father, therefore, while never rich in a remotely serious sense of the term, was tolerably well off. In our middle-class household we had a cook and two maids, and my father was free-lancing, writing books. He wrote ballet criticism for the *Daily Telegraph* at that stage. He wrote other books on art and various things, but he didn't have an actual fixed job in a way that now would be taken almost for granted.

SMITH: I noticed that he had a decoration.

HASKELL: Yes, well, that was the result, really, of later activities. That was when he was director of the Royal Ballet School. It was a school where potentially talented dancers would get a general education. I think the decoration he got was really in relation to that rather than what he'd done earlier on. He was known, really, as a person who was very, very much involved with the Russian ballet. He wrote a book called *Balletomania*, which was a huge success, and he wrote one of the very first Penguin paperback books on ballet. I



remember him telling me that it sold a million copies worldwide, which certainly put me in my place. [laughter] He did have a very big reputation in that way, but it was more casual, rather than depending on the job. This decoration he got, the C.B.E. [Companion of the British Empire] was for being responsible for the Royal Ballet School.

SMITH: And that was during the war and thereafter?

HASKELL: The actual ballet school started very soon after the war, either late forties or early fifties. I can't remember the exact date.

SMITH: Did your mother have a career?

HASKELL: No, my mother had no career. Her parents came from Kiev, in the Ukraine. I think her father was probably already dead at the time of the [Russian] Revolution and my mother left with her mother, who I did know quite well, and a brother and sister, both of whom outlived my mother. My mother died of cancer about twenty-five years ago. She and her family came to the West the way Russian émigrés did then, so far as I can remember. They went first through Constantinople, then through Berlin, then to Paris.

I think they left quite cunningly, around 1917, before the absolute total clampdown. Presumably they were able to take a certain amount of money.

They lived in France, and my mother married my father, who was an Englishman. They came to settle in England, but her mother, brother, and sister,



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all of whom I knew well, lived very modestly in one or two-room flats, first in Paris, and then during the war they moved to Nice. They lived very, very simply.

SMITH: Did you learn Russian as well as French?

HASKELL: No, my wife reproaches me tremendously, and so did my mother. During the war, when all travel abroad and everything else was virtually impossible, I made a vow with my mother to learn Russian with her. I started learning it in a kind of casual way during school holidays, but I never got really far. I can understand a bit now, just enough to censor my wife's telephone calls when she says ten people are coming to dinner tomorrow. I know what's going on, but seriously, the answer is, I never did really learn Russian, unfortunately. It's certainly one of the things in my life I very much regret.

SMITH: Did you travel around Europe as a child?

HASKELL: As a child, very regularly. Every summer holiday—again this was a very standard sort of thing—we went to France. As a child I never ever went further than France. We used to go to Brittany and that sort of thing.

SMITH: And Paris?

HASKELL: Paris, yes, I must have gone to Paris before the war, but I remember enormously well the effects of my first visit to Paris after the war. It made an overwhelming impact on me. I was born in 1928, so I was eleven when



the war broke out. We were in France, in fact, just a few days before the war broke out, and I remember we had to take a taxi back. We were near the Spanish frontier, at a hotel on holiday, and one day we came in and the waiter who normally served us in the restaurant wasn't there to come and take our orders. I remember my father asking the manager what happened to the waiter and he said, "Oh, haven't you heard? He's been called up for military service. The Germans and Russians have just made a pact." We were on holiday, and I suppose we weren't reading the paper, and the manager told us that war was absolutely certain, so everybody had been called up for military service.

My father immediately said, "Well, we must get back to England." There was no way of traveling back because the trains and public transport were more or less commandeered by the authorities, so we did a sort of mad thing. My father just took a taxi from near the Spanish frontier to Calais, which was the only way of going. It took us about three days and two nights. We spent one night in Tours. One of my early memories is of French armored vehicles and tanks on the cobbles of Tours. We stayed in a hotel, and I remember the noise throughout the night. I'm now a terrific insomniac, but that was one of the first nights I never slept, I suppose, because all night the tanks were sort of rumbling over the cobbles.

I remember the taxi stopped at one stage, in the dark, in some little tiny



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French town or village. There were lights in the center of the village, and there was just one radio. People didn't ordinarily have radios in their homes then, but there was one which had been put in the town square, and [Edouard] Daladier, the French prime minister at the time, was speaking and everyone was listening. He was saying that the French army from then on might take over any kind of transport to get troops to the front. I remember the taxi driver saying, "If they come and take my taxi, I'll shoot them. I'll resist to the last." I remember my father saying, "If that's the sort of spirit in which the French are going to go to war, fighting against their own government more than against the Germans, the outlook's not very bright." [laughter] Anyway, this is taking you too far away from what you were asking me, but these are things I do remember quite well.

SMITH: Obviously, culture was an important part of your family life as you were growing up, but what kind of culture were you exposed to?

HASKELL: Well, curiously enough, it's rather paradoxical in light of what later happened to me. My father had lots of pictures in the house, and I've inherited one or two of them, but I don't remember being at all interested in them at that time. My father used to take me into his study and I remember him putting gramophone records on and asking me what I liked and what I didn't like and then he would tell me what I was hearing. That comes back to me vividly now. Then during the war he took me to the first art exhibition I ever remember.



There was an English collector—oddly enough I've had reason to study him professionally since. His name was Michael Sadler, and he collected what were then modern pictures, sort of French impressionist and postimpressionist pictures. During the war, around 1944, there was a sale, or they were exhibited in a gallery or something. I remember my father taking me to that and these were, I suppose, almost the first pictures I had looked at. During the war there wasn't much opportunity to see pictures even if you wanted to see them, but, to be honest, I don't think I terribly wanted to. I'd like to say, "Oh, that's when things first started," but it's not true.

SMITH: Would you say your father was someone with avant-garde tastes?

HASKELL: Well, in a way, yes, but like myself, like everyone, as he grew older he became less avant-garde. He wrote one of the first books on the sculptor [Sir Jacob] Epstein, around 1923. I used to go and visit Epstein with him. Well, Epstein now is looked upon as the reverse of avant-garde. He's now looked upon as having been a profoundly reactionary artist by modern art critics, but at the time he was thought to be avant-garde, and my father did possibly write the first book on him, so in that way, yes, he was avant-garde, but not electrifyingly so. He was interested in contemporary art, certainly.

SMITH: I know this is a period that's slightly later, but to what degree was your family part of the Bloomsbury circuit?





HASKELL: I would say absolutely not at all. The Russian ballet was rather a cult in the Bloomsbury world, but as far as I remember I don't think my father knew any of those people personally. I went to Cambridge, to King's College, when E. M. Forster was there, and I met various people through him and I knew him well, but that was all much later. I don't remember my father ever having mentioned the Bloomsbury people or any of them coming to our house.

SMITH: Did you have siblings?

HASKELL: I have a brother and a sister, both of whom are younger. My brother is three years younger than I and my sister is seven years younger.

SMITH: What kind of career choices did they make?

HASKELL: Well, my brother became a schoolteacher, then he got rather ill. He now spends a lot of time writing. We get on extremely well, but we don't see each other very often. When I was younger I got the distinct impression, and in fact I think most people did, that my brother was going to be enormously more successful than I. He did extremely well as a scholar. He used to win scholarships right and left and was very bright, and I think he probably got on much more easily with my parents than I did. He did extremely well at the university and passed all his exams and was very keen on being a writer. He also got very involved with religion in a way which I never have. My father was religious in a rather strange sort of way and I think it was very temporary and not

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very serious, but my brother took it very, very seriously and I think he still does. We couldn't have a serious conversation about it because he knows the kind of religion he believes in doesn't mean anything to me.

We had dinner together recently and my wife and I are planning to invite him down for a weekend very soon. He married and then the marriage broke up, which is awful, but he has children and he sees them, and, in a way, I think he's possibly much more relaxed and happy than I am. Although we get on very well now, we don't see each other often.

In some ways, looking back, although my parents were both extremely good to us, and kind and helpful in every way, it didn't work terribly well. This would require an analysis rather than an interview and I don't think I'd necessarily believe what an analyst would say about it, but looking back, it clearly wasn't a very happy relationship between our parents and ourselves. I'd have denied this enormously at the time and wouldn't have understood it, but I now see it in retrospect, through my brother, and in a way through my sister. She wanted terribly to break away from home, so she left England and went to New York, where she got a job in publishing. She met her husband there. That marriage also has broken up, unfortunately, but she had two sons, who are doing very well, and she seems reasonably happy. I think she went to New York really because she felt she had to break away from home. She's now doing social work

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem.

2. In the second part we shall consider the case of a single particle.

3. The third part is devoted to the case of a system of particles.

4. In the fourth part we shall consider the case of a continuous medium.

5. The fifth part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

6. In the sixth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

7. The seventh part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

8. In the eighth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

9. The ninth part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

10. In the tenth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

11. The eleventh part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

12. In the twelfth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

13. The thirteenth part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

14. In the fourteenth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

15. The fifteenth part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

16. In the sixteenth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

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18. In the eighteenth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.

19. The nineteenth part is devoted to the case of a system of continuous media.

20. In the twentieth part we shall consider the case of a single continuous medium.



of one kind or another, but she didn't have any overriding enthusiasm for any particular kind of thing.

SMITH: You mentioned religion and I did want to ask you what your family's religious practices were.

HASKELL: The family was Jewish, but it would be nonsensical to say Jewish in the sense of having anything to do with religious practice. I think I've been in a synagogue twice in my life, and it had nothing to do with religion. The first occasion was when the son of a friend got married, and the second was as a tourist in Venice, so I was brought up as a sort of agnostic. At school you had to go to chapel everyday and that sort of thing.

SMITH: Even though you weren't Church of England?

HASKELL: Yes. You could have protested. I remember in my first school, when I was very, very young, my parents did apply for me not to have to go to special religious instruction. I think to be totally honest, both from their point of view and from my point of view, this wasn't at all because they objected to religious instruction; it was just because they looked upon it as rather a nuisance. I was allowed to, I don't know, collect stamps or something instead—it was a sort of frivolous reason. I remember the day that Hitler moved into Austria. I was at that school and class was going on. I would then have been nine years old. All the other boys were at this religious instruction and I wasn't, so I heard



about it from someone: "Hitler's moved in." In these odd ways I remember my being excused from religious instruction.

Later on, when I went to public school, to Eton, I used to go to chapel just like anyone else. I was never aggressively against going to chapel. It was like anything else, like going to a meal in the college hall or something; it was the kind of thing you did. During the war it was quite moving because they used to read out the names of people who had been killed. It was a kind of community thing rather than a religious thing. So in all that, I was brought up in what you might call a completely ordinary, conventional, nonbelieving but conforming spirit.

During the war, my father wrote an autobiography describing how he got involved in Catholicism. He got converted in a way which didn't last very long. Even at the time it never seemed to me a very serious or committing thing to him. But later my brother also became Catholic, and I gather, more from what my sister tells me than what my brother himself tells me, he's now tremendously serious about it. He goes to early mass everyday and this kind of thing. I don't really talk to him about it, not because I've got anything particularly against it, but I just feel there's nothing much I could say.

SMITH: Do you think in some way that culture or the arts took the place of religion in your life?

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the

properties of the function  $f(x)$  defined by the equation

$$f(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

for  $x \in [0, \infty)$ . It is shown that the function  $f(x)$  is

increasing and concave down on the interval  $[0, \infty)$ .

2. In the second part of the paper, we consider the

problem of finding the maximum value of the function

$$g(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

on the interval  $[0, \infty)$ . It is shown that the maximum

value of the function  $g(x)$  is attained at  $x = 1$ .

3. In the third part of the paper, we consider the

problem of finding the minimum value of the function

$$h(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

on the interval  $[0, \infty)$ . It is shown that the minimum

value of the function  $h(x)$  is attained at  $x = 0$ .

4. In the fourth part of the paper, we consider the

problem of finding the maximum value of the function

$$k(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

on the interval  $[0, \infty)$ . It is shown that the maximum

value of the function  $k(x)$  is attained at  $x = 1$ .

HASKELL: I've sometimes wondered about this myself. In a way, I suppose, yes. I think I do have a kind of belief that you should in some way be involved or tied to something in the past—it's a terrible phrase, but to have some sort of roots somewhere, as it were. The real dramatically important change in my life and development was when I first went to Cambridge; that's where everything affected me. I look upon that as being, in a way, decisive, and I suppose it was at that stage that I definitely decided I wasn't religious, that I was—I don't know how one puts it without being terribly pretentious—sort of tied to culture rather than religion. Before that period I think I was fairly neutral.

SMITH: The interwar period was a period of endemic anti-Semitism, and I wondered to what degree you experienced that or were aware of it, aside from what was happening in Germany.

HASKELL: Paradoxically enough, I experienced it during the war and not before the war. It really does sound silly to say, but I think it's true: I don't think I knew that I was a Jew before the war. It just wasn't a thing that was talked about. Somehow it didn't arise. But then when I went to Eton, it did arise dramatically, in 1941. I remember it was very strong indeed. Nothing actually happened to me particularly, but it was a very, very anti-Semitic environment. I remember extremely well, on the first day of the term we all had to go and see the headmaster, and he would effectively give us a talk about the



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evils of masturbation. The word masturbation wouldn't be used of course; it was phrased as "doing something horrible," or something like that. We were all standing and waiting for this fatuous talk, which everyone knew was going to be fatuous in advance. I need hardly say that all the boys had laughed about it and knew what was going to happen. It was a sort of longing for the sexual thrill of being told not to be involved in sexual activities, if you see what I mean. While we were waiting for this talk, I remember people deriding me and being anti-Semitic to me. Nothing much can have happened before this because I remember that it was such a shock and such an enormous surprise. It was almost as if someone should now say to me, "How dreadful it is to have red hair," or something, which I haven't got. It's always nasty being insulted, but it just was enormously peculiar and surprising. It's perfectly possible that something may have happened before then, but that was when it really made an impact on me. During the war there was an awful lot of anti-Semitism.

SMITH: Was it along the lines of, If you're Jewish you can't be English?

HASKELL: Well, I don't remember that. I don't think the argument reached that degree of sophistication. [laughter] I think just being Jewish was bad enough in itself. It was looked upon as a sort of dreadful thing to be in itself, as I remember it.

SMITH: I have one more question about your father. To what degree was he



influenced by the Clive Bell, Roger Fry kind of mentality?

HASKELL: I honestly don't think he was. I don't think my father thought in those terms, really, oddly enough. Now that you mention this, I suppose I ought to have thought about it more, but somehow or other it doesn't seem to me that this was his way of talking or thinking about things. It was later on, when I went to Cambridge that I first really came across the names Roger Fry and Clive Bell. I probably heard the names before, but I don't remember them as an influence in our household.

SMITH: What about Eton? What were your interests there?

HASKELL: It was always very, very surprising that I even went there. What happened was that I was at a "prep school," as they are called in England.

SMITH: In London?

HASKELL: No, it was first on the southeast coast, in a place called Westgate, near Margate. I went there in 1936 and I was there for two years and then the war appeared to be coming. In 1938 we were all going to be evacuated away from there. We'd all been issued gas masks because we thought war would come at any minute, and then [Neville] Chamberlain came back from Munich, you know, waving his bit of paper, "There'll be no war in our time," and everything else. I remember feeling a terrible disappointment that there was going to be no war. Somehow it all seemed as if it would be terrifically exciting if there were a





war. Munich was a tremendous letdown. At school we were given a sort of half holiday to thank Mr. Chamberlain for saving us from war.

My mother came down especially to see me at school during that half holiday, and she said that what Mr. Chamberlain had done was disgraceful. I look back upon that visit with great admiration now. My mother felt we had betrayed Czechoslovakia, and it was a most awful, shameful moment. It seemed to me enormously peculiar. I mean it was so gay. Everyone was cheering in the streets, and so on. It seemed so odd. I know Churchill subsequently said this also, but at the time I didn't know that.

Anyway, then we were all evacuated from there and we went to Somerset, to a rather Elizabethan house called Barrington Court. I haven't been back since then, but it's open to the public and it's one of the great Elizabethan houses of England. We were moved there, and I was doing very well at school, I had good marks and everything else, and the headmaster there said to my parents, "Why don't you put in for a scholarship for him at Eton?" He thought it would bring great glory on the school if they got it—I don't think he'd ever had a scholar at Eton before. I don't know what my parents planned for me, but certainly they'd never thought of that, because I remember there being great, great surprise. At any rate, the result was I did put in for an Eton scholarship, I did get one, and, as I say, it was a great surprise. The term began in September 1941 and the

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying our curiosity about the past, but also a means of training the mind and of developing the character. It is through the study of history that we learn the lessons of the past and are enabled to avoid the mistakes of our predecessors. The author also emphasizes the importance of the study of the history of the United States, particularly in the light of the fact that the country is now approaching the centennial of its independence. It is suggested that a knowledge of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and for the development of a sound policy for the future.

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exam must have been in June or July. I remember it well because it was a time of bombings and we were in London. The school was evacuated to the country but my house was still in London and I remember air-raid sirens and warnings the whole time.

The scholarship to Eton meant my parents didn't have to pay all the fees. They paid something, but not the full fees, and I lived an extremely austere life at that school. I was in a kind of dormitory and it was much worse than anything in the army or anything that happened to me afterwards in terms of discomfort.

SMITH: In a funny kind of way, then, you were the poor boy?

HASKELL: Yes, that was perfectly true. Some very clever people could get a scholarship at Eton but would not take it. It was regarded as rather *infra dig*, rather below things taking it, because, as you say, you were basically regarded as being poor. I can't pretend that I was poor in the way that people really have been poor. We had a cook and two maids and so on, but I was certainly poor by the standards of other Etonians who didn't have scholarships. To get in, ordinarily you did have to be very rich, and we certainly weren't that kind of rich at all. I can't remember what the fees were, but it was a really very, very small sum.

SMITH: Did you get a foundation in classical education there?

HASKELL: Yes, which I'm enormously grateful for. You know, as I grow



older, I'm almost uselessly grateful for it because there is so much I've now forgotten. Whatever I am politically now, which is I suppose what you would call left of center, culturally I regard myself as extremely reactionary and I'm getting more reactionary culturally by the day. In other words, I would like everyone to have had what I had, which was Latin and Greek. There was one marvelous master who used to read Socrates's last speech from *Phaedo* with tears streaming down his eyes—that sort of thing. I can still remember that. We used to have to learn bits of Greek plays and even though I've forgotten it all now, I'm just enormously glad it happened. In that kind of way I do regard it as terrifically important. I'd give almost anything to start it over again now, and then not forget it, if you see what I mean.

SMITH: So you spent the war at Eton?

HASKELL: Yes. I was at Eton from '41 to '46. Everyone in England is now talking about how they are going to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war. I remember the actual end of the war was celebrated at Eton by a great sort of anti-Semitic outburst of people saying, "Let's throw the Jews into the river," or something of that kind, so it wasn't my happiest day, as it were. I look upon it with a certain irony.

SMITH: This was the future English ruling class.

HASKELL: Exactly, yes exactly. And that no doubt had its effect on me in one



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way or another. To be honest, I think people were really very, very much nastier than they are now. I haven't got children so I don't know about how the young are now, but I think England was a much more closed and nasty society than it is now.

SMITH: But of course during your last year the Tories had been voted out of office.

HASKELL: I remember that terribly well, yes. I remember the election results because I was at the dentist in London when they came through. I remember the radio was on and the dentist was so stunned by the Labour victory that I thought he was going to forget to pull the drill out of my tooth. I think my father must have voted Labour then, and I remember saying I was tremendously pleased and excited, but at the same time I felt rather scared. You know that kind of feeling one has of being pleased and at the same time being slightly frightened that the end of the world might happen at any minute. I was partly pleased because everyone else at Eton was so terribly hostile about the election results. If it annoyed them so much I thought there must be something right.

SMITH: What led you to go to Cambridge?

HASKELL: Immediately after Eton I had to do military service. In my last year at Eton I decided I wanted to do medicine. This is one of those bizarre phenomena I've been looking back on in my own life. I can't quite make out



what my motives were. If you did medicine you avoided the army, and I think that motive did play a big part in my decision. Also, during the last year of the war, you know, the concentration camps were being discovered and there was the horror of that and the feeling that you had to be on the other side of death. I know this sounds pretentious, but I think it played some part. So I did medicine and I even passed my first M.B., which is the first part of medical training. I suppose I must have realized even at that stage that I had absolutely no talents for medicine at all, so I was called up and I did military service.

I spent three or four months in Paris, in '45, which was colossally important for me, and then I went to do my compulsory military service. It was acutely uncomfortable and I hated every second of it, and so on, but the war was over and there was no danger or anything, except the danger of freezing to death. It was a terrible winter in England.

SMITH: You weren't stationed in Germany then?

HASKELL: No. The first few months I was stationed up in the north country, in Yorkshire. I think almost anyone you would ask in England would agree that that winter was the worst winter that England has ever known. Of course it was terrible because there was no fuel, and I remember we had snow in the barracks, which were Nissen huts. Day or night, you just never got rid of snow, even inside the barracks. I'm not exaggerating. I got terrible bronchitis and all sorts





of things like that, but there was never any danger apart from that. I wasn't sent abroad to fight. I hated army life, I wasn't made for it at all, but I did meet a great friend, a painter whom I haven't seen now for years. I don't even know if he's still alive, but I've got lots of pictures by him at home. I liked him very much and he became a great friend. We used to go to London on the weekends and see exhibitions together and that sort of thing.

SMITH: What was his name?

HASKELL: His name was John Eyles. When you come home I'll show you his pictures. I remember seeing a Francis Bacon exhibition for the first time during my military service. I suppose it must have been in '46 or '47. It was a very early Francis Bacon exhibition and John was very keen on me seeing it.

SMITH: What was it about your three or four months in Paris that was so shattering for you?

HASKELL: First of all, it was the first time I had been independently away from home, really. My father had a French friend who was a painter, and he looked around and asked if there was somewhere I could stay. I couldn't have stayed in a hotel, so they found a French family in Paris, which consisted of a mother and daughter, and I stayed with them as a kind of paying guest, a lodger; it was immediately after the war. Well, among other things I lost my virginity; that is something that one remembers. But quite apart from that side of it, it was

[The text on this page is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a list or index of items, possibly names or titles, arranged in several columns. Some faint words like "List", "Name", and "Address" might be discernible, suggesting a directory or a catalog. The text is too blurry to transcribe accurately.]

a very, very strange and exciting moment. At that stage I used to keep diaries. I remember going to a trial of collaborationists and going to the theater every night, seeing French plays and meeting people and going out to bars. Somehow it was an independent life of a kind I'd never ever known before. It was just a completely new experience for me. The fact that I was abroad meant that my parents weren't surveying me and I could do what I wanted, in a way.

SMITH: Everything must have been quite poor?

HASKELL: Tremendously so. At that stage there was still rationing, even in the restaurants. You had to bring coupons for bread and everything else.

Curiously enough, England was worse.

[Tape I, Side Two]

SMITH: In Paris were you drawn to the classical culture or to the avant-garde, modernist culture?

HASKELL: Well, I was staying in Montparnasse, which still had some of its prewar glamour. I don't think there were many painters left there, but there was still the idea of painters, and I was tremendously impressed by this. I met someone who claimed to have been the mistress of Modigliani and that sort of thing. You know, painting had been going on in New York then, but it was a long time before anyone in Europe had any idea that there was any painting outside Paris. It was like being in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century or

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something. You still felt that if anything was going to happen anywhere it would be in Paris, and I was tremendously conscious of this.

It's very, very difficult to disentangle one's true feelings. I don't know whether I actually did like anything I saw in the way of modern art, but I certainly had the belief that I wanted to be part of this environment. I met one or two people who took me around to painters' studios and told me that these were the young people of the future and so on. None of them have ever been remotely heard of since, but I remember thinking that this was very exciting.

Curiously enough, the only tangible proof that remains of this period is a picture that I did buy at the time, for five pounds, by a rather well-known painter [Armand] Guillaumin, an impressionist. Well, he was not exactly an impressionist, but he was associated with them. He was quite well known, in all the books and everything else. I bought the painting from Guillaumin's son. The painting shows a French sentry in the 1870 war, standing, and the son wrote on the back of it, "Mobilisé comme garde militaire en 1870. Mon père a fait ce petit tableau en attendant sa tour de garde," or something of that kind. So this was the only tangible object that emerged from that period of my life—a little picture painted in 1870. I was there in the 1940s, so my commitment to contemporary art certainly wasn't very strong, regardless of what I thought it ought to have been.



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SMITH: What about literature, philosophy, and drama?

HASKELL: I did used to go to the theater a great deal and I did see modern plays. Like everyone else at the time, I suppose, I read Sartre—not philosophy, because I don't think I understood it then or now, but I did read his novels. I was tremendously aware of the possibility of seeing Sartre in the cafés. I don't think I ever did see Sartre, but I'd go to the cafés and I might have seen him, if you see what I mean. [laughter] You know, as often happens, I think it was much more the idea of what might be happening than the actual reality that really fascinated me. The idea that one might be seeing all these tremendous people was very, very strong.

Curiously enough—I was thinking about this the other day—about a year or two later, when I was back in Paris, the only thing I really spontaneously enjoyed that was new was the ballet. I'd rather reacted against my father and against the ballet, but there was a French ballet company run by a man called Roland Petit. My father knew him and introduced me. They gave me tickets and I used to go almost every night. I made friends with some of the people, and I was absolutely mesmerized by them. It was modern ballet, what would now be called neoromantic more than avant-garde, but, still, there was new music by new composers, new designers, and everything else, and that was very exciting.

Then there was wonderful, wonderful French acting on the stage, but on

# THE HISTORY OF THE

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the whole they were older actors. There was Louis Jouvet, and Marguerite Moreno. Of course there was Jean-Louis Barrault—all these people were tremendously exciting, wonderful actors. I can't pretend that it was terrifically new, but it did make a huge impact on me. For better or for worse it was my first exposure to life, to sex, to culture, and all that sort of thing, on my own, and that did count, yes.

SMITH: But postwar France was a very highly classicized "new."

HASKELL: Yes, but my life wasn't organized enough for me to think much about what I was doing; it was much, much more casual. It depended perhaps on someone saying, "Let's do this," or someone saying, "You ought to go and see this." It was much more that than any sort of systematic policy on my part. That may have happened later but not there.

SMITH: When you decided to go to Cambridge, did you have family connections there?

HASKELL: My father had been at Cambridge, but at a totally different college. He went to Trinity Hall. I went to King's College, which was the super influence on my life, in a way. I met the provost, who was the head of the college. I can't remember . . . I'd done well in some sort of exam or something and the provost said, "You must come to King's." Now there would be about a hundred different committees and people deciding whether you said the right





things or the wrong things, and so on. In those days, you know, the head of a college had enormous authority; he'd just say, "Come to King's." So I came and I really can't recall how it happened, but luckily it was absolutely made for me.

SMITH: Now was that 1947?

HASKELL: It was probably '47 that it was decided, but I was only demobilized from the army in '48.

SMITH: So you were in the army for two years?

HASKELL: Yes, it was about eighteen months, in fact, because it was about the end of '46 until about the middle of '48.

SMITH: By this time had you begun to think that you might study art history?

HASKELL: No, not at all. I went to exhibitions, but there was no art history. It was impossible to think of it, really, there wasn't such a thing. I've probably still got my annotated catalogs of the first two exhibitions I saw. There was an exhibition almost immediately after the war organized by Anthony Blunt, whom I subsequently knew well. It was an exhibit of the royal collection, the king's pictures. Then there was another exhibit very soon after that called *Landscape in French Art*, for which I've got a very fully annotated catalog which I made at the time, and that was just sheer pleasure, but the idea that I could study art history never remotely occurred to me at that time.



SESSION TWO: 22 APRIL, 1994

[Tape II, Side One]

SMITH: I had another question relating to World War II. At any point, particularly at the beginning of the war, were you, your family, or the school, concerned that Britain might lose the war? Did your family have plans for escape in that event?

HASKELL: No, we certainly had no plans for escape. You know, a lot of English children were evacuated and went to America, but I don't think it ever crossed my parents' minds; we went on going to school.

SMITH: You were in the country?

HASKELL: Well, the school had been evacuated into the country. Our house remained in London, but in 1944 the house was bombed and was destroyed. We spent most of our school holidays in the country because my parents didn't want us to go on living in London. London was being bombed every night. I remember going to the theater in London sometimes, with air raids and all the rest of it, but on the whole we were in the country. I suppose it's perfectly possible my parents may have thought that the war might be lost, but at that age I don't remember it ever occurring to me. It's like one's parents. It never ever occurs to one that one can't love them. Do you know what I mean? It's sort of automatic. By the time I was old enough to think about this at all, then it was



quite clear we were going to win the war. The time when we might have lost it would have been during the first two years, and I don't remember thinking about it; it just never crossed my mind.

SMITH: Well, let's move on to King's College, Cambridge. You said yesterday rather emphatically that it had transformed your life.

HASKELL: Yes, I think that's true. In a way it sounds rather absurd, but almost everything that's happened to me since is probably a result of my first two years at King's College. A great, great deal has emerged out of that period. It's very hard to talk about it in precise ways. It wasn't exactly things I learned from the lectures. I did enjoy lectures and I did do well in exams and so on, but it wasn't specifically that. I think it would probably be very, very hard to explain to you or to anyone now, let alone to anyone who looks at these things in the future, just how confined and restricted life was in those days—I mean both at boarding school and of course in the army—in the sense of a lack of freedom. God knows, what people were going through in Europe or in the war was a completely different order of things, but, nonetheless, intellectual freedom was lacking, and suddenly King's was like opening some extraordinary window where everyone could talk about everything and go out at night and stay with friends and drink. I don't want to give the impression it was an orgy or anything of that kind, but it was just a complete feeling that everything had changed.





Opportunities came.

I experienced this a bit in Paris, but there I was on my own, so it was entirely different. I was thinking about this on the bus to London yesterday. Paris was very exciting for me, and I did meet other people, but in Cambridge I made a lot of friends very quickly and we were a whole group of people who enjoyed meeting and talking and all the rest of it.

SMITH: I wonder, who were the students you felt closest to?

HASKELL: Well, there was someone one who was very, very important to me, and he had nothing to do with art history, a man called Simon Raven. I still see him, but not very often now. He's turned into quite a well-known minor novelist here in England, although to be absolutely honest I don't like his books at all, really. Simon is a sort of disreputable character but enormously engaging. He's a tremendously liberating character, somehow. He behaved badly in every possible way, but was tremendously exciting to me. And there were various other people as well.

SMITH: Was he your same age?

HASKELL: I think he was about three or four months older than I, but to all intents and purposes, yes.

SMITH: Same class then?

HASKELL: Yes. I got to know him quite early on and was sort of mesmerized



by him. I spent a lot of time with him during the first year. We went out together, we ate together in town just about every single evening for almost a year. I was completely fascinated by him. I think again it wasn't anything he said, although he was a very intelligent person and so on, but it really just was this feeling of general liberation. I don't think I'd ever met anyone like that before and there was no possibility that I ever would meet anyone like him again.

SMITH: So he was your closest friend?

HASKELL: He was quite certainly my closest friend, yes, but there was a group of three or four other people. One of them was an artist and I haven't seen him for a long time, actually, but whenever we do meet I'm always terribly pleased to see him. He became a potter, a ceramicist. I often used to joke about this. Of all the people I did know at the time, he was the only one who has done exactly what he always wanted. He always said that he wanted to be a potter and he did it, and now he's well-known in England and even abroad. He has exhibitions and his things are bought by museums.

SMITH: And his name?

HASKELL: His name is Alan Caiger Smith. Then there was a man called Jasper Rose, who was a painter. He went off to America to teach, I think at an art college, and, to be honest, of all of that group he's the one I've heard least of. I haven't heard anything about him for the last twenty-five or thirty years, I





suppose. There was one other great friend in this group, a man called Martin Shuttleworth, whose dream was to become a novelist. Whenever I meet him he still thinks he's going to be a writer, but I'm afraid he's my age so I don't think that's very likely. All of us used to see each other almost every day, and that meant a lot to me. Just being able to make friends was very, very important, really.

SMITH: Your fields of study were history and English?

HASKELL: What happened was, if you'd been in the army, you were allowed to take your bachelor of arts degree after two years instead of after three. I did history for my first two years and got a first, which is the highest degree you can get, and then as a result of that I was allowed to stay on and read for part two of the tripos, the exams, and it didn't really matter how badly you did, because you'd already got your first. In fact, for that part I changed to English literature because the person who taught it was an absolutely marvelous man whom I adored. He's now aged ninety-one, and I went to his ninetieth birthday last year. His name was George [G.H.W.] Rylands, and he played a terrific part in the English theater. He was absolutely wonderful and I was sort of intoxicated by him. I liked him so much and was so full of admiration that I switched over to English just to read for that last year. And then in that exam I didn't get a first, I got a 2-1, the top of the second class degree. Nonetheless, I like to say that I

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future.

2. The second part of the paper discusses the role of the government in the development of the United States. It is argued that the government has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the role of the individual in the development of the United States. It is argued that the individual has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that his actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of the community in the development of the United States. It is argued that the community has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

5. The fifth part of the paper discusses the role of the nation in the development of the United States. It is argued that the nation has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

6. The sixth part of the paper discusses the role of the world in the development of the United States. It is argued that the world has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

7. The seventh part of the paper discusses the role of the future in the development of the United States. It is argued that the future has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

8. The eighth part of the paper discusses the role of the past in the development of the United States. It is argued that the past has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

9. The ninth part of the paper discusses the role of the present in the development of the United States. It is argued that the present has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

10. The tenth part of the paper discusses the role of the future in the development of the United States. It is argued that the future has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

got a first, because that means the other part counted. So, yes, I did history and English.

SMITH: Who were your history professors?

HASKELL: Well, the people who taught me there have now both died. They were both very nice, but they weren't electrifyingly exciting. There was Arthur Hibbert, who I liked very much and who was very different from the average teacher. He came from a different kind of social background from most of the people who were in Cambridge, and he was very lively. I was fascinated because he used to talk about medieval history or something, and he'd suddenly compare it to the Russian Revolution. In other words, he sort of brought everything rather alive. But he wasn't a marvelous historian.

The people I really learned from, in a way, were not the people who were actually teaching me at that stage. The man who made a great impact on me is indeed someone I still see all the time now, a man called Noel Annan. He's now Lord Annan. He became head of London University and he lectures in America. It's possible that you've come across him because he lectures at Berkeley quite a lot. He was very interested in English nineteenth-century intellectual history and he used to give wonderful lectures on George Eliot and [Charles] Darwin and the great controversies of the nineteenth century. I remember terribly well these lectures were always on a Saturday morning at twelve o'clock. Everyone used to



go with him to the pub and have a drink afterwards. These were great events in my undergraduate life. But Annan never, or very, very rarely, actually taught or supervised me directly. We became great, great friends and he still is one of my very closest friends. He's ten years older than I am, but we got to know him very, very well. He wasn't married when he was at King's, and at that time King's was extremely famous as the university where the teachers and the undergraduates were on very close terms. You called your professor by his Christian name and so on.

SMITH: Oh, really?

HASKELL: Yes. E. M. Forster was a classic example of this, but one called all of them by their Christian names. One would invite teachers to parties and they would invite students to their parties. This was looked upon by the rest of the university with great suspicion, as being all wrong. But that's what did happen and I loved it, so Annan counted for me incomparably more than the people who were actually teaching me history. I went to lectures by other historians, which were quite good, but I don't think there was anyone else who made a very lasting impact on me.

SMITH: Could you characterize the kind of approach to history that was being taught at that time?

HASKELL: There was one historian who I suppose became famous, or





notorious, whatever one chooses. He was a very powerful lecturer actually, a man called [Herbert] Butterfield who wrote a book called *The Whig Interpretation of History*. He was a sort of lay preacher—I think literally, really—and he used to lecture as if he was trying to drive out the devil. [laughter] He was very powerful in that way. I suppose he did make a big impression. One of his great arguments was that the Renaissance had never taken place and that the whole thing was invented by historians. I knew very little about the Renaissance, but I was brought up with the conventional view that something absolutely terrific had happened, and he was tremendously dismissive of that. So I suppose in that way he was the most original thinker among the historians. Otherwise I'd say it was what would now be dismissed as sort of positivist; you know, just fairly standard lectures on English constitutional history, or whatever it might be, which weren't terrifically thrilling, as far as I can remember.

SMITH: Was there much in the way of social history?

HASKELL: Not an enormous amount, no. I think that really came later.

SMITH: I was wondering, it really couldn't have been too much later because Peter Laslett was there—

HASKELL: Yes, well, Peter Laslett, that's perfectly true. I knew him there. I don't think he's much older than I am. I used to hear about him, and I did indeed even meet him much later when I went back to Cambridge as a fellow,



but not when I was an undergraduate.

SMITH: Well, that's what I was thinking; it was actually the mid to late fifties when he started publishing.

HASKELL: Well, you see, I'm talking about '48 to '51 now, and I don't remember Peter Laslett's name coming up, really. One heard about people like Bertrand Russell, or Wittgenstein in the philosophy world, but then that wasn't the kind of world that I went into, you know. Perhaps I'm being unfair, but among the historians I honestly can't remember anyone I would now think of as a very powerful, exciting or interesting historian. Perhaps I'm wrong about that. Perhaps I'm being terribly unfair and I'll suddenly in the middle of the night remember someone.

SMITH: Well, you'll have adequate time to correct that. You've mentioned several times that you did know E. M. Forster.

HASKELL: I mentioned him because he really was a tremendous influence. I sometimes thought of those games the newspapers occasionally play of asking who was the biggest influence and who do you admire most and all the rest of it, and I suppose he was that. Ultimately, I think his view of the world was one that did make an enormous impact on me. At any rate I did see a lot of him and we immediately called him by his Christian name, which was Morgan. He would come to parties, and we would go for drinks, such as they were; usually it was a





glass of sherry and I always hated sherry. [laughter] But we did see a lot of him, and his general view of the world did make an enormous impact. I still think it's probably the best view of the world I know. That's not to say that it's not full of wrong things, as it were.

I did an interview with him once, which was one of the first things I had ever published. In conversation, Forster was constantly administering a series of tiny surprises. He made me feel one should never take anything for granted; there was always another angle to be looked at. It was a very undogmatic view of the world. I suppose you could describe it as a very liberal view of the world, but I'm not using "liberal" in a political sense. It was liberal in the sense that it required you to challenge liberalism just as much as everything else. Now, I don't say he absolutely lived up to that; he certainly didn't, because he had tremendous prejudices himself. Nonetheless, the theory behind it was that nothing could be absolutely fixed.

I remember Forster wrote an essay about Roger Fry, which made a great, great impact on me. He said that Roger Fry was the kind of person who would say something like, "The prime minister says it, the leading article in the *Times* says it, Jesus Christ says it. Well, let's just wonder if there's anything in it." [laughter] In other words, he was somehow refusing to be bludgeoned by anything, intellectually. I think Forster himself exemplified that philosophy, in



theory if not always in practice. This approach has remained with me—also, more in theory than in practice, because I do get enraged and dogmatic. But when I'm trying to be my best, I try to pull myself up and say, "Well, should I be really indignant about this? Shouldn't I think of another angle?" So this philosophy also counted for me tremendously.

SMITH: Was he someone you would just go and visit?

HASKELL: Yes, he used to love that. He was very, very easygoing about that. You would just knock on his door and go in and sit down and talk to him and then he would talk to you. He used to like that tremendously.

SMITH: Of course, for the last fifteen years people seem to talk about him as if the only important thing about him was that he was gay. Was that an issue at the time?

HASKELL: No, not at all, really, but we all knew he was homosexual. He asked me to read what was then his unpublished novel, *Maurice*, which was published after his death, and I talked about homosexuality with him. Under other circumstances I'm sure one would never ever have actually talked to him about this, but he lent me the novel and asked me what I thought about it. There were one or two tiny little changes in the novel as published which were due to me. This was the marvelous thing about him, really. He was always ready to take any sort of advice or criticism from people. You know, I was, I don't



know, sixty years younger than him or whatever it was, and when I gave him back the novel I said I was a bit puzzled by something and he changed it, and he was a world famous novelist.

I remember dropping in on him one evening and asking him what he'd been doing or something, and I remember him saying, "I've just been to drinks with Peter," or whoever it might be—some undergraduate my age—"and he was telling me such interesting things about General De Gaulle." That sort of stuck in my mind. Here was this man, this famous novelist, then about eighty or something, and here was an undergraduate, I suppose about eighteen or nineteen, telling him interesting things about General De Gaulle. It just remained in my mind that he could take things in in that sort of way.

About the homosexual thing and all the rest of it, I will say that he didn't like it when I married. I brought my wife to see him and he was always very nice to her, but he didn't like his friends getting married; there was no doubt about that. He never said it directly to you, but one just sort of knew that he didn't like it. I don't think one actually talked about his sexual preferences with him. I suppose we were interested in the sexual habits or practices of our friends and our own contemporaries, but at that age we couldn't imagine anyone aged seventy or eighty having a sex life at all, you know, so I don't think it really mattered much. [laughter] But I did know him quite well, because I was one of





the very, very few people who attended his seventieth, eightieth, and ninetieth birthday parties. As he grew older and older, fewer and fewer people came to his birthday parties. I remember the ninetieth one because I flew back from America on the day before, just to go, so I did know him quite well, and he did make a great, great, great impact on me.

SMITH: One of his most famous works was the dystopian story called "The Machine Stops." Did that reflect a kind of conversation about the future that was taking place in Cambridge?

HASKELL: "The Machine Stops," yes. Well, you see, virtually everything he'd written had been written so many years before then. The great question that was always asked about him in our time was why hadn't he written more? Why did he stop writing for so long? That was something we never asked him. I think he rather hated being asked it; anyway, he would have certainly have hated being asked by us, so we never asked. So I don't think anything that was published reflected anything of the Cambridge of my time; it was all much, much earlier.

SMITH: Actually, I was leading up to the question of postwar expectations and responses. The other people we've interviewed for this project who were educated in Britain at the time have talked about a real deep concern about Britain being reformed and an enthusiastic embrace of the new.

HASKELL: Because of the Labour Party and all the rest of it?



SMITH: Yes, the Labour Party, and the fact that the destruction allowed things to be rebuilt and there was a sense that the old aristocratic order could be thrown out once and for all.

HASKELL: I can't honestly pretend that that played even a remote part in our thoughts.

SMITH: None of the people I was thinking of were in the Oxbridge circle either. They were all in London, or the red brick—

HASKELL: I'm sure there were people at Oxford and Cambridge to whom this applied, but the people I've been talking about, my friends and everybody else, were, in a way, far too obsessed about ourselves and our own lives and the books we wanted to write, or whatever it might be. It was still difficult. It was terribly cold and you were allowed one bucket of coal a week, which you had to go and fetch. We weren't starving; it wasn't like what's happening in Yugoslavia or anything, but it was cold and food was rationed. It was quite tough going, but I don't even remember that really mattering, somehow. I think we were just enormously self-centered. I don't mean necessarily about ourselves individually, but about the other people in our group. I remember wanting to know what they had done the day before, and we all went on about that. But I was very, very nonpolitical. None of us belonged to any political society. I voted Labour, and I would have called myself Labour, but it played absolutely no serious part in my





life.

SMITH: But even beyond politics you weren't concerned about being "modern"?

HASKELL: No. Absolutely not at all, to be honest.

SMITH: What were your goals at this time and what were you writing?

HASKELL: Well, actually, it was all rather a puzzle to me. I mentioned that I did well in the history part of the tripos and even in the English part, though there I didn't get a first, and by that stage I really became very interested in art and I used to travel with Simon and Alan—we went abroad and so on. I also traveled with my parents and on my own, looking at things. I went to exhibitions in London, and then there was this man, Nikolaus Pevsner, who was a great German refugee art historian, who used to give Slade lectures once a week, on the history of art.

SMITH: He was the Slade Professor?

HASKELL: He was the Slade Professor, but he was such a huge success that they went on renewing him forever. The Slade professorship now lasts a year. In those days it lasted three years, but as far as I remember they just went on and on with Pevsner. No one could face the idea of him going away; he was a huge success. He was not at all a show-off lecturer, but he was extremely professional. The lectures were about art from the beginning to the end, more or less, and I used to go to all of them.



There was a friend of mine who, curiously enough, I met the other day for the first time in about thirty or forty years, Gail Sieveking. As the name indicates, he was the son of a Scandinavian man who was a BBC producer. When I first met Gail I said I was really very interested in art, and I'd like to do something more about it, and he said, "Oh you must come and meet Nikolaus Pevsner. I'll introduce you." Gail was a man of terrific self-assurance. So, after one of the lectures, Gail took me up to Nikolaus Pevsner and said, "This is Francis Haskell. He's interested in talking about art." Nikolaus asked me to come and see him the following week for tea, or something of that kind. I went, and I remember Nikolaus saying to me, "Who on earth was that person who brought you up to see me?" Pevsner was very nice about it, but Gail had given me the impression that he was an intimate friend of Nikolaus's; he just had this terrific self-assurance. [laughter] So I met Nikolaus Pevsner and he was very encouraging.

Then my college did this thing for which I'm really eternally grateful. They said they would allow me to be a research student for a college fellowship. In those days, in English universities, a Ph.D. was of almost no significance. It was looked upon as a sort of peculiar thing that all Americans did, but at Oxford and Cambridge it was almost looked upon as slightly degrading. A college fellowship was a different. So my college said that they would subsidize me to



read for a college fellowship, but they made this extremely intelligent, observant sort of judgment that they would do this on condition that I went away. They were very perceptive to see that I had so enjoyed myself at King's and had such a good time that had they kept me I might just have stayed on in Cambridge and written I don't know what there, just continuing in this kind of eternal student syndrome. So they very, very sensibly said they would allow me to read for a college fellowship on condition that I went away—a long way away.

SMITH: So you had spent three years there.

HASKELL: That's right. Then I talked to Pevsner again and said I was kind of interested in art and I didn't really quite know what to do. If a pupil of mine came to me now and said that I probably would not accept him as a student. I'd say, "You really must pull yourself together," and so on, but in those days, somehow— That's why I always feel rather guilty now if I turn down students.

Anyway, Pevsner then said to me, "Well, why don't you go off to Rome and look into *Jesuitenstil*." He was very, very much of the German view that a style reflected a society and a period—a zeitgeist. He himself had written about Jesuits in art when he was younger. So I went to Rome and traveled around Italy for about two years. I learned Italian and moved in with an Italian family and stayed there and made great, great friends, including my closest friend now, an Italian. I met him at that time and shared a flat with him.





I then wrote a dissertation on this topic, and that was where I completely broke with Pevsner. Not personally, not in the slightest, but in methodology, as it were. I suppose it started from that moment, because it didn't seem to me there was much point in just reading Jesuit theology and all that, so I went into the Jesuit church archives and tried to find out all I could about them. I found out really quite quickly that this notion of *Jesuitenstil* was rather absurd because very often what was in a Jesuit church had nothing to do with the Jesuits and very often it was actually there against the will of the Jesuits and was imposed on them by powerful patrons.

SMITH: That's something you would find in the archives?

HASKELL: That's something I found in the archives, and sometimes in early published sources, but it began in the archives, yes. Sometimes in the archives you would find letters of the Jesuits actually protesting that Cardinal so-and-so wanted them to put a special altar somewhere and they didn't want to, and then the Cardinal would have his way because he had the money. The Jesuits weren't rich then. Later they became rich, but when they first started out they were a very, very poor society and they were keen to get on in the world, so to speak, so they were prepared to take anything from anyone. And once that started, then if you found out that Cardinal Farnese had insisted on something happening in the Jesuit church, then the next thing was to try and find out a bit more about who



Cardinal Farnese was and how he worked and so on.

The dissertation at that stage was confined just to the Jesuits and art in Rome in the seventeenth century. I immediately found that I was tremendously attracted by Roman baroque art and I went around and looked at everything I possibly could and I absolutely loved that. I loved the work and I loved the research and all the excitement of going into an archive and suddenly finding things. All that went to me and I got an electric spark. I then submitted my thesis, and I had to wait for about nine months before that was judged by a college committee.

Then one day my friend Martin, whom I mentioned, suddenly saw in the paper an advertisement for a job in the research library of the House of Commons, so I applied. I can't think how, but somehow I got the job. Again, it sounds absolutely mad when you think what it would be like now. I suppose there must have been some sort of committee or something, but not at all the bureaucracy there would be now. So I got that job and I absolutely loved it because I just generally do like research for its own sake, even if it's finding out, I don't know, how many tons of coal Romania is producing a year or something. What would happen was that M.P.s of both parties would come in and ask exactly that—how many tons? I remember at the time there was a great issue about Trieste, between Italy and Yugoslavia—what was the population, how many





Slavs were there, and I just loved the whole process of reading up and finding reference books. I just colossally enjoyed that, even if it had nothing to do with art history.

There was a special part of the gallery where you could go yourself, and I saw Churchill and Aneurin Bevan, all the great figures of the time, and then one would see one's own M.P. whom one had briefed, and hear him getting it all wrong; everything you told him he would muddle up and get it all wrong.

[laughter] Quite often you'd have to spend the whole night or half the night there when there were late night debates, but it was all terrific fun; I enjoyed it enormously. And then suddenly I was telephoned about nine months later and told that I'd got this fellowship and my dissertation had been accepted and that I was a college fellow. For a minute or two I was almost disappointed because I really did so much enjoy the House of Commons, but it would have been mad to turn it down, so I then did accept the fellowship and came to Cambridge as a research fellow at King's.

SMITH: Has your dissertation been published?

HASKELL: No. When I had the House of Commons job I had no time to do anything much. At the same time as I was doing that job, I was translating. It was absolute torture at the time, but in retrospect I'm quite glad. I was translating a gigantic book from the Italian into English for a man who has also



become a great friend of mine, although he's now very ill and old, Franco Venturi. It was a book called *Il Populismo Russo*. It was very, very good for me to have to do it, but doing that along with the House of Commons job was very hard work. So when I then came to Cambridge they then said, "Well, now you'll have time, what about publishing your thesis?" At that stage I said to them, "I think it would be mad to publish the thesis as it stands."

I think I was already reacting against what you might call a very narrow kind of history and this *would* be, because it was Rome in the seventeenth century. It would be this little monograph. So I said in a sort of arrogant way that I thought I had the key to something much, much more interesting and much wider and that was how the whole system of patronage in the arts worked in the seventeenth century altogether. The college said fine, so I got to work on it. I must say they were very, very long suffering, because I then said, "Well, that's okay, but I don't want just to do that. I think I ought to contrast it with another, different sort of society, Venetian eighteenth century, for instance, and make a *great* book out of it." The college then extended my fellowship and that idea then turned into this first book of mine, *Patrons and Painters*.

SMITH: Which was published in 1963, so that's ten years.

HASKELL: That's a terrifying thought, but it's true. It probably was about ten years of research.



SMITH: Of course part of that time you were a librarian.

HASKELL: Part of the time I was a librarian. And then, you see, when I went back to Cambridge there was still no art history department, which was absolute paradise if you were just there. Then they founded an actual art history department and I was made librarian of the department, but I then had to do a lot of teaching as well, so that also held up the publication of the book. It was a book that took a number of years' work, yes, but it wasn't quite as bad as it looks.

SMITH: But you're an art historian who has in effect not really been trained in art history in the way that others of your generation in America were, or even others here in England.

HASKELL: Indeed. I never went to the Courtauld or anything, no.

SMITH: You mentioned the *Jesuitenstil* and that sort of German approach, which is actually rather typical of a whole approach to art history.

HASKELL: Yes. Art history in England was, effectively speaking, the Courtauld Institute of London University, which was run by Anthony Blunt, and Anthony was very much against that approach, in a way. The Courtauld people later on rebelled enormously against his approach, which was very, very empirical. Anthony had his own views as we all know, Marxism and everything else, but the art history that he taught and the Courtauld taught had absolutely no





ideological or intellectual content in it. On the contrary, I remember the Courtauld students I knew at the time being terribly indignant because Anthony turned down or cancelled an invitation that had been given to someone who wanted to lecture on the theoretical basis of art or something of that kind. Anthony's approach then was very, very much what you might call straightforward art history. It was very much like what America used to be: the Fogg at Harvard and that sort of thing, which has now also tremendously changed, but it was very much like that.

The Courtauld would have been the only place I could effectively have gone, and I think in one way I enormously regret not having done so because I'm deeply conscious that my weaknesses stem from the lack of any proper training in connoisseurship. I'm acutely aware of that. On the other hand, I have a feeling that if I had gone there then I wouldn't have done what I have done, which was a kind of *pis-aller*. I was trying to develop what I could do, which was the historical side, rather than what I couldn't do. So the answer is, you are absolutely right, I had no proper training in art history and the Courtauld must have looked at what I was doing as being utterly absurd. I remember when I did get the job here at Oxford, a friend or colleague of mine came up to congratulate me, and he said, "Congratulations. I'm so glad you got it. I knew they didn't want a real art historian." I remember him telling me this—a double-edged



compliment, but of course in a way he was dead right.

SMITH: I understand that they had rather negative feelings towards [Edgar]

Wind, though this was more the case at the Warburg, I suppose.

HASKELL: You can say that again, yes.

SMITH: So there was I suppose a long tradition of expecting Oxford to be the antithesis.

HASKELL: Well, that is true. Of course, I obviously should have mentioned the Warburg itself.

[Tape II, Side Two]

HASKELL: It must have been Pevsner who took me along to Warburg for the first time, and I then fell completely in love with it. It seemed to be an absolutely wonderful place. There was open access to books, which is a thing I've always cared about tremendously, and everyone was helpful and nice. I don't know if you saw that piece I wrote for a German paper in which I described the Warburg in those days. The whole atmosphere was marvelous and terribly appealing and I liked everyone enormously.

SMITH: About what time are we talking about?

HASKELL: Well I'm mostly talking about the time when I was working on the book, I suppose around '54 or so. I've got a letter somewhere from [Rudolf] Wittkower in which he asked to read my thesis and I think the letter was dated





'54.

SMITH: Have you picked up connoisseurship over the years?

HASKELL: No, not really. At one stage I used to try and sort of vaguely bluff my way through, but I now don't even try that.

SMITH: And you weren't trained in formal analysis.

HASKELL: No.

SMITH: Have you done readings in [Alois] Riegl and [Heinrich] Wölfflin and that sort of thing?

HASKELL: Yes, oh yes. I had to teach Wölfflin and I still have to teach him.

SMITH: So you teach formal analysis, but you don't seem to apply it in your own work; it's not a central part of your argumentation.

HASKELL: No, that's perfectly true.

SMITH: What about iconology? Did you pick that up at the Warburg?

HASKELL: Yes, I read all the books. I read [Erwin] Panofsky and the standard things that were easily available. Again, to be very honest, I don't think it played a very, very central part in any of my writings. And I must say I sympathized with the sort of anti-iconological approach which was partly engineered by a pupil of mine called Charles Hope, who is now actually at the Warburg. He didn't say it was all nonsense, but he had very, very anti-Wind views. Hope implied that the idea that Titian would have ever heard of



Platonism is absolutely idiotic. When Titian paints a woman lying on a bed it's just a naked girl for a lustful prince. The idea that it represents an allegory of virtue or something is absolute nonsense. Hope sometimes argues in a rather crude way, but, nonetheless, I was quite glad when this reaction came along, and everything I've read since does suggest to me that in a way he's basically right. If one does try to understand what did happen in the past, it seems to me that it doesn't correspond in any way to what Wind and other people were saying then.

SMITH: So you would not agree that [Marsilio] Ficino, for example, was so important in terms of how the painters were thinking?

HASKELL: There's the [E. H.] Gombrich essay on Botticelli and Ficino. I'm not saying that one or two painters painting one or two pictures may not have been influenced by Ficino. He may have been there, talking to Lorenzo, or whoever it might be; that's perfectly possible, yes, but I'm very, very doubtful that it happened as a general thing.

SMITH: The kind of art history that you do seems to be more like cultural history or intellectual history.

HASKELL: Yes, I think that's true. It's also what has now been given a sort of fancy German title, *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, but I was doing *Rezeptionsgeschichte* before it had a name, as it were.

SMITH: I did want to ask you a little bit about your philosophy of history, if



you don't mind. I know you have written that you do not consider yourself a theorist; you are quite empirically grounded in what you do. There is the question of history providing narrative explanations or lawful models of the past, what I think [Lewis] Namier referred to as a nomothetic type of history. Have you been aware of those kinds of distinctions?

HASKELL: Oddly enough, I've never systematically read Namier. I must have read parts of the George III book or the one on English politics during the American War of Independence. I was extremely fascinated by his approach, and if anyone is remotely interested in what might be called influences on me, I'm absolutely convinced that they would put Namier among them. I think that this would in a way be right and in a way be wrong. It would be right in the sense that I heard a lot about Namier. Namier was discussed and I knew what he was doing and so on, but it would be totally wrong in the sense that I actually read a Namier book all the way through and thought, "Oh gosh, this is the way things ought to happen." I think I was influenced by Namier in the way I suppose you could say almost anyone in the twentieth century has been influenced by Freud or Marx, whether they've actually read them or not. It would be very, very hard not to have absorbed some of that.

I think the man I do look upon as my sort of ancestral father, if I can put it that way, would be someone like [Jacob] Burckhardt. He is more a historian



[Faint, illegible text lines, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

than an art historian, although he did write some straight art history. During the war they did a small Phaidon edition of Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and it must have been important to me because I remember getting a book token for ten and sixpence, probably as a birthday present or something, and I remember going along to the shop. I can see myself crossing the bridge and going into W. H. Smith's and buying this book. It's terribly hard not to be phoney about this because I'm absolutely convinced, if I'm being completely honest, that I never read it right through to the end. I probably didn't get more than a quarter of the way through it. Subsequently I've read it many times, I've had to lecture on it and write about it and God knows what, but nonetheless, even that initial glance did make me feel that this was the real thing. I suppose this was a real reactionary view because that book was well over a hundred years old, even at the time.

There's a game I play sometimes with friends. It's a game I almost invented, where you sit around with people over a drink and say, "What is the book you yourself would most like to have written?" With me it would be absolutely without any question Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. That's the single book I would most like to have written in the world. And I think I somehow had a glimpse of this from the beginning.

SMITH: What is historical explanation for you? How would you define that?

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people. The paper then discusses the various methods used by historians to study the past, including the use of primary and secondary sources, and the importance of critical thinking in the study of history.

2. The second part of the paper discusses the role of the federal government in the development of the United States. It is argued that the federal government has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the federal government, and the impact of these policies on the country.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the role of the states in the development of the United States. It is argued that the states have played a central role in the development of the country, and that their actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the states, and the impact of these policies on the country.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of the people in the development of the United States. It is argued that the people have played a central role in the development of the country, and that their actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the people, and the impact of these policies on the country.

5. The fifth part of the paper discusses the role of the economy in the development of the United States. It is argued that the economy has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the economy, and the impact of these policies on the country.

6. The sixth part of the paper discusses the role of the culture in the development of the United States. It is argued that the culture has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the culture, and the impact of these policies on the country.

7. The seventh part of the paper discusses the role of the environment in the development of the United States. It is argued that the environment has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the environment, and the impact of these policies on the country.

8. The eighth part of the paper discusses the role of the military in the development of the United States. It is argued that the military has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the military, and the impact of these policies on the country.

9. The ninth part of the paper discusses the role of the education system in the development of the United States. It is argued that the education system has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the education system, and the impact of these policies on the country.

10. The tenth part of the paper discusses the role of the health care system in the development of the United States. It is argued that the health care system has played a central role in the development of the country, and that its actions have shaped the course of American history. The paper then discusses the various policies and programs of the health care system, and the impact of these policies on the country.

HASKELL: Well, I did rebel against theory, if that's the right word, because the single thing that I would most like to consider about the past and about art—and this is certainly apparent in *Patrons and Painters*—is the "Rankean" question of what actually did happen. If one goes to look at a fresco or a painting or anything else—how, actually, did that happen? Now, very, very early on indeed I realized I couldn't accept that it happened in some way because Jesuitism was in the air, nor could I accept a kind of Marxist view that it happened because at that stage the baroque was a symbol of aristocratic power. That might or might not be true, but it wasn't at all interesting to me. What was interesting was what actually happened.

I'm not really answering your question, I think, but, nonetheless, it's something I feel so strongly about in my writing. I just did want to know. Of course connoisseurship would have been very important for this approach. It would be very important to know who actually did the thing, but I accepted that I'd never be able to crack that one. I wanted to know why something looked the way it looked. Was it because a patron said he wanted so many figures and he'd pay for so much in gold, or whatever it might be? In a way, historical explanation to me almost always has consisted in just wanting to know what actually happened at any given moment. It sounds boring, but I think that really is true. I'm not saying theories don't matter, because clearly they do matter, but

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sense of national identity. The author points out that the study of history is not merely a collection of facts and dates, but a process of interpretation and analysis. It is through the study of history that we can learn about the values and beliefs of our ancestors and how they have shaped the course of our nation's development.

2. The second part of the paper examines the role of the federal government in the development of the United States. It is argued that the federal government has played a central role in the nation's history, from the early years of the Republic to the present. The author discusses the various powers and responsibilities of the federal government and how they have evolved over time. It is also noted that the federal government has been a source of both strength and controversy, as it has sought to balance the interests of the states with the needs of the nation as a whole.



I'd say that they're not of particular interest to me because they're not things that you could demonstrate one way or another in any serious way.

I feel this now enormously about psychoanalysis. I'm just reviewing at this very minute a sort of psychoanalytic interpretation of collecting, which seems to me absolute total rubbish, I'm afraid. I'm not quite saying that in my review, although I am being rather harsh, because it just seems to me that the questions that are being asked are ones that cannot possibly be answered really seriously, whereas there are so many terribly, terribly interesting questions which can be answered—not necessarily correctly, but they can be answered. So to my mind, at any rate, historical explanation as I approach it gets one further along and it is more interesting and more rewarding.

SMITH: Of course the riposte to the Rankean positivist model of history is How do you know that you've actually found something?

HASKELL: Well, this is perfectly true. Perhaps I could attribute this to my Forsterian heritage, but the one thing I would never ever want to say, and I hope I haven't said, is that there is only one kind of art history and everyone should be doing what I'm doing. I certainly don't believe that. Although I'm not a philosopher and I've never read [Karl] Popper, I've heard so many people talk about him, especially Gombrich. You know, the importance of falsifiability. If one suddenly discovers that Cardinal Farnese had died three years before I said



he had, when according to me he should have been telling the Jesuits what he had been telling them three years earlier, then I'd be proved wrong and have to think again, but that could never work in the kind of Marxist or psychoanalytic way. That possibility scarcely exists; the possibility of proving something factually wrong.

SMITH: Of course with Marxist, and possibly some Freudian interpretations, somebody like Farnese is really a cipher or a token for something else.

HASKELL: Yes, I know, this is what is said.

SMITH: So from your historical point of view then, Farnese as a man, is a unique event that is absolutely critical to what happens.

HASKELL: Well, once again, I know that what I'm now saying is too simple because I know perfectly well that Cardinal Farnese could not have been what he was if he'd been living in 1850. In other words, all sorts of other things are going to make a great impact and determine him. I recognize that. When I say Cardinal Farnese is very important I realize that all the prince's cardinals or little abbés are very, very important, and all of them are themselves responding to certain particular circumstances. With that I entirely agree. But to my mind history does consist of trying to find out what those circumstances were through investigating how people thought and responded to them, rather than saying something had to happen. I mean the Marxist view, as I understand it—again not



having read Marx or Hegel seriously—does say that certain developments are inevitable. I do believe that if, ultimately, all the questions I asked could be answered, which of course they can't, then one really would understand a great deal more about history, whereas I don't believe that is the case with Marxism, Freud or anything else, somehow, if you see what I mean.

SMITH: So if I could extrapolate from this, you're suspicious of lawful-type historical explanations?

HASKELL: Yes, very, very much indeed. French radio interviewed me fairly recently after a book of mine appeared and they sort of went on about my anti-theories and everything else. Of course, to the French, what I do is very alien, although it's been received well. But I was terribly pleased with myself at the time of this broadcast because I said that I was *against* theory but *for* ideas—I thought it was so quick of me. [laughter] In other words, I'm terribly against the notion that all you have to do is just find one thing after another. I'd like to think the kind of history that I write couldn't possibly be written without ideas, and to some extent I suppose even a little nascent theory.

But you're absolutely dead right. I am very, very against the all-embracing idea. I think that probably has got something to do with my training at King's. I never read philosophy, but it had to do with talking to people like Forster—that attitude that one should be suspicious of anything set in too wide





terms. You could just say, "Yes, but what actually happened?"

SMITH: Did you take any courses on aesthetics or do any reading in aesthetics?

HASKELL: No, none at all.

SMITH: Still staying within your Cambridge years, I did want to talk to you about your responses to general intellectual currents that were happening in the fifties in general. Of course psychoanalysis was having a heyday in the fifties. Were you reading Freud, or were you interested?

HASKELL: I read Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, oddly enough, before, in my last year at Eton. I remember very well being in bed with appendicitis—I had my appendix out—and I remember reading Freud, but I've never read him seriously. When I came back to Cambridge after I had left the House of Commons and been to Italy and everything else, there was a completely new generation of people totally unlike the people I'd been describing earlier on. By really almost uncanny coincidence, in view of what is happening to us now, I went to this party in London after I left you yesterday and it was given by someone of that generation, and it was like being in Proust or something. Suddenly there were people I hadn't seen for donkeys' years, all exactly seven years younger than me, who were a very brilliant generation, far more creative and brilliant than my particular friends whom I've been talking about. To begin with, they were more political.



Secondly, they were the first people to recognize the impact of America, as opposed to Europe. There was a sort of radical, fundamental change in English life then.

To all of my generation, these Alans and Simons I've been talking about, and indeed this still applies to me now, Europe was, outside of England, our spiritual home. I never went to America until 1962 or 1963. And then I only went because I thought, "Well everyone must go." Now I go to America quite often but then I went almost as a kind of duty. I felt it was absurd not to go, really. But usually, if I had the time and the money, I would go to Paris or Italy. To this generation seven years younger than me, whom I was meeting last night, America was the thing. Suddenly America completely replaced Europe as the place where they thought exciting things were going to happen—new developments in philosophy and psychology, in writing, in the arts and everything else.

The people of this new generation all made a mark in English life afterwards, unlike the people I'd known earlier on. One of them was Jonathan Miller, who became enormously famous. I knew him very well, and another was his brother-in-law, Karl Miller, who was editor of the *London Review of Books*, and before that the *New Statesman* and *The Spectator*. He was big in that way in English literary life. The person who was giving the party I went to last night,





Gary [W. G.] Runciman, has written a lot about sociological theory and he has become very well known in England. There was a man called Tony Tanner, who wrote about American literature. I think he's an archetypal person who sort of fell in love with America, who previously had written about English literature in England. There must be many more whose names will come back later. All of them were much more interested in America, or much more interested in the modern world, and the outside world. None of them was seriously political, but nonetheless political issues would have meant *something* to them, whereas it wouldn't have meant anything to the people I was talking about—my friends from 1948 to 1951.

Of course we used to discuss ideas and I remember discussing psychoanalysis with Jonathan Miller because his mother had been an analyst herself. It did have a very, very salutary effect on me, being in touch with people notably younger than myself. So in that way it was important, but whether it actually did affect my ideas about history or theory or anything, I'm not sure myself. I don't know.

SMITH: What about existentialism?

HASKELL: No. I saw it purely as a sort of picturesque thing that happened in Paris. If existentialism meant anything to me, it meant tourism, like going to Seville in Holy Week or something, if you see what I mean. [laughter] It was

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something that happened, that was exciting, but not in any remotely serious way.

SMITH: So you might read something by [Albert] Camus or Sartre.

HASKELL: I read Camus and Sartre at the time, but not the philosophical things. Well, Camus I did read one or two semiphilosophical things but I never read Sartre's philosophy. I did read all his novels and I liked them very much, and I liked the Camus novels enormously, but I just read them because I enjoyed them as novels. I don't think I read them because they were making what you might call a philosophical impact on me in any way.

SMITH: Did you read [Simone] de Beauvoir?

HASKELL: No. Well, again, I read her novels. I still haven't read *The Second Sex*, which is now a bit late in the day to start, really. [laughter] I read *Les Mandarins* because it was all about Paris intellectual life and so on, and I tremendously enjoyed that, but that was like gossip.

I'm sure that this would be a thing that my critics would point to, but I think I do prefer nineteenth-century historical writing to twentieth-century writing. I still do find myself enormously enjoying reading nineteenth-century histories. Twentieth-century histories of course I read because one has to, but if it were a question of settling down for pleasure, I would choose any nineteenth-century book. Although I say my critics would enormously reproach me with that bias, I don't think I'm prepared to reproach myself with it. I'm prepared to

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reproach myself for lots and lots and lots of things, for instance, the question of connoisseurship, but if people say that I'm talking rubbish when I say that nineteenth-century historians did really have something very, very important to say, which a lot of twentieth-century historians have lost, it doesn't worry me one bit. I'm prepared to go on saying that I'm right.

SMITH: Do you like [George Macaulay] Trevelyan?

HASKELL: Yes, but he is I think the last and weakest of them, if you see what I mean. I think it is beginning to fizzle out with him. It's a long time since I've read him. I read David Cannadine's book on him the other day, actually, but Trevelyan's not the man I'd go to the stake for.

SMITH: Now the other thing, I think particularly at Cambridge, was the question of language philosophy and of course you had Wittgenstein, but in the history faculty you also had [J. G. A.] Pocock and [Quentin] Skinner, who were developing their linguistic approach to historical analysis.

HASKELL: Yes. Pocock I think I met only once at a conference in Italy, but Quentin Skinner I do know a bit and I do see him from time to time. I can't honestly pretend that Skinner would have made any impact on me at all at the time. Subsequently Skinner and I have talked about things and although I've read very, very little of his, he's one of the people I do absolutely keep on meaning to read because I have an idea that he is doing things that would interest





me very much.

SMITH: Well, that's what I was wondering, because the concept of discursive analysis would seem useful in terms of the kinds of things that you've done.

HASKELL: I'm sure you're absolutely right about that and I really do want to do this. I went to a lecture that Skinner had given subsequently in Oxford and actually it was an art history lecture. But when I read reviews of him in things like the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *New York Review of Books* or whatever it might be, I make a mental note to read his books because it does sound like just the sort of thing that would appeal to me. Like so many things I've wanted to read, it has just gone by the board. When I retire I probably will read him, and it'll be too late.

SMITH: The other movement that became quite powerful, and I think it also has Cambridge roots, is cultural studies—Raymond Williams and [F. R.] Leavis before him.

HASKELL: Well, Leavis was to us at King's exactly what [Edgar] Wind was to the Warburg; he was the enemy, if you see what I mean. I went to Leavis's last lecture when he was retiring because I thought one must go to what would be a kind of historic occasion, you know, so that if I had grandchildren I could say I went to Leavis's last lecture. I went in that sort of mood. I thought it would be absolutely packed and I went early and everything else, but, oddly enough, it



wasn't a terrific occasion. Leavis was looked upon as rather the devil incarnate. I'm afraid this is a bad habit which I do reproach myself with, but things that somehow one's told one must do or must read I do rather rebel against, and George Eliot was the Leavis par excellence of nineteenth-century novels, and I never read George Eliot till long after I'd left university. In fact, I've still got a copy of *The Mill and the Floss* my friend Martin gave me, with the inscription, "To Francis, who really should read this," or something of that kind. I just absolutely refused, because Leavis and all the Leavis pupils said, "No man could be considered educated unless they've read this," and that made me determined not to. I concentrated on Dickens instead, which I love, but partly because Leavis said that Dickens was no good, you know. [laughter]

George Rylands, who I did English with, held the view that you must read everything you possibly could, which is what I did, and not concentrate in a narrow way. I realize I'm being rather a disappointment in all this. I did read a certain amount of Raymond Williams, but I couldn't really quite understand the excitement or the fuss. I see today in the current *New York Review of Books* someone is writing a biography of him and asks for information about Raymond Williams, but I couldn't see that he was terribly, terribly interesting, I'm afraid. A lot of what I did read seemed to be a bit banal.

In a way, I did feel myself extremely isolated. There were extremely few





if any people I could talk to about the kind of art history I was trying to write. A great friend of mine, Benedict Nicolson, who was the editor of *Burlington Magazine*, of whom I was enormously fond, very kindly read my *Patrons and Painters* and made some very, very important suggestions to me, but we didn't exchange ideas. I didn't find anyone was terribly interested in what I was doing. Whether it's for better or worse is irrelevant, and I'm not meaning to be arrogant; I think it just is a fact that I didn't find anyone who was particularly interested. This really does take one back. I remember staying with Bernard Berenson once, and I remember him asking me, "What are you doing?" I can't remember when he died.

SMITH: He died in '59, I think.

HASKELL: That's right, yes, because I remember he was alive during the '56 war with Israel. Anyway, a great friend of mine was his secretary and I used to stay there quite often. Berenson asked me what I was doing and I said I was working on art patronage in the seventeenth century. I remember him saying that there wasn't such a thing, and what an extraordinary thing to do. He said that there was art patronage during the Italian Renaissance, but what a waste of time otherwise, so it was a slightly dismissive remark. Of course he was a very old man, but even among younger people there were those who felt the same way. Nikolaus Pevsner was enormously generous and kind and friendly and

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the statistical analysis performed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study. It includes a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the findings of the research. The data shows a clear trend of increasing activity over time.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results have significant implications for the field of study and may lead to further research in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the main findings and provides a final statement on the importance of the research.

everything else, but I don't think he thought what I was doing was terrifically interesting in itself. He was encouraging, though. Anthony Blunt was nice to me and helpful and would always send me bits of information and I would chat with him about all sorts of things, but I suppose he was interested in it just insofar as it affected Poussin, because it could help one to show something about Poussin. I don't think the general issue interested him terribly, because he did have a Marxist view, which didn't emerge in his teaching, but it was his general view that things had to happen, if you see what I mean. Gombrich was very, very nice and helpful and so on, but I don't think he found it terribly interesting either.

SMITH: Besides England, you also have a community in Italy, don't you? What about them?

HASKELL: Well, I don't think any of them were remotely interested. They were terribly important for me, but I don't think any of them were interested in my subject. Italy was radically divided between two art historians, [Leonello] Venturi and [Roberto] Longhi—there were two camps. The one thing they both agreed on was that the only thing that mattered was connoisseurship, in a way—finding out who painted what and publishing unknown pictures by artists. I'm not dismissing this; it was very important. For the seventeenth century it was crucial, because in those days—it sounds as though I was talking about the



Middle Ages or something, but it's true—there were almost no monographs on seventeenth-century Italian artists. They almost didn't exist. So in that way it was enormously important for me to go and look at things with these friends who knew connoisseurship. Without them I couldn't have done anything at all, but I don't think they were interested in what I was doing. They've all very kindly cited me, saying, "See Haskell's important work," or something, but then that's that, if you see what I mean. It's always gratifying to have that said, but for them it's a terrific shorthand so they needn't bother with the subject anymore. If they're writing a monograph on Bernini or Pietro da Cortona, there's almost invariably a footnote: "For the general background see Haskell's important work." That saves them the awful nuisance of having to do anything about it at all. [laughter]

SMITH: Who are you talking about?

HASKELL: There was a particular friend of mine, [Alessandro] Marabottini [Marabotti], who is now doing an exhibition in Florence. He has written various monographs on Italian artists. Then there's a Venetian art historian called Terisio Pignatti, who actually goes to America a great deal and teaches there quite a lot.

SMITH: He's at the Correr [Library, Venice] right?

HASKELL: That's right. He's done endless books on Venetian artists. Then there's a man who's now dead who was in Naples, Raffaello Causa. I've just



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been asked to contribute to some sort of volume in his memory. Then there's a very, very nice man indeed, who died last year, Giuliano Briganti, who wrote a very good book on Pietro da Cortona. In his book he had about three or four extremely helpful pages on cultural background. I managed to get hold of the book in proof before it had appeared, and it did make an impact on me, but he wasn't really fundamentally interested in my work. The leading Italian art historian, Federico Zeri, who is a great international figure, has said nice things about me, but he also is not remotely seriously interested in my approach. So all these people I did know, and they all say nice things, they're pleased that I've studied Italy and I hope they're friends and so on, but I don't think they're interested in what I'm doing.

SMITH: We interviewed Paola Barocchi for this project, and she actually talks of your work in a transformative kind of way.

HASKELL: Yes, it is true, but Paola Barocchi wasn't one of the people I really knew at the time; I got to know her much later. She's a person I like and get along perfectly well with and so on, but she was never part of my world then. I suppose in my whole life I probably haven't met her more than about eight or nine times, if you see what I mean. As you know, she's a rather distant kind of person, very self-contained.

SMITH: Yes.



HASKELL: She's invited me to lecture at Pisa, and she's always extremely encouraging. She sends students to me and so on, but she was never among the people in whom I confided about my work. "Confided" is the wrong sort of word, really, because there was nothing secret. She published a volume of essays of mine, and she's always been very, very helpful and told students about what I was doing. I think among younger people she may have had an effect, and they appreciated my work more.

SMITH: This may be an aspect of the scholar's life: the people one has the most influence upon are the people one doesn't meet or know, really.

HASKELL: I think that's perfectly true, but what I mean to say is, if I had been a connoisseur writing a monograph on some Italian seventeenth-century artist, then I'd have met the same people that I have met and what I was doing would have made some real sense to them. The last thing I want to do is give you the impression of persecution, because it's the absolute opposite of that, but I think it is just that among most of them there is a feeling of relief that someone else has done this—me—and that now it needn't be done, so to speak. That's fine; they always do give me credit in the nicest possible way, but I don't think it's a thing that any two of them would ever much discuss among themselves—"What do you think of Haskell's books?" I can't see that happening among the people I know, whereas if I had written a monograph on someone they would say, "Do you





believe that Haskell's right in saying that this altarpiece is by so-and-so?" This is not meant to be in any way a complaint of persecution, because I've had nothing but friendliness and friendship from them.

SMITH: Are there questions in your Italian intellectual circles that are different in some ways from the questions in English circles?

HASKELL: Well, in Italy, it was entirely Marxist. In Italy one really did have endless political battles. I suppose this is probably self-regarding, but in England almost everyone was much more lightweight in politics. They were sort of agnostic, left in the sense of voting for the Labour Party, or later on, in my case, for the Liberals; it was that kind of thing, not deeply committed, whereas in Italy a great many of the people I knew were actual Communist Party members. I remember far more discussions about politics than I ever do about history or art history. Also in art history there was this Longhi-Venturi battle about who were the great artists. That was very exciting; I enjoyed all that.

SMITH: And you clearly aligned yourself with the Venturi camp?

HASKELL: Well, I was, yes.

SMITH: Was that an accident?

HASKELL: It was pure accident, just because through Wittkower I met this Italian, Marabotti, who was a pupil of Venturi's. I knew lots of the Longhians and Longhi himself was a sort of genius. Venturi was a rather second-rate art



historian. Longhi was a corrupt man and all sorts of things, but he was a far greater mind. He really did have a mind. He sort of turned Italian art upside-down, and he was far more exciting to read. I saw him once, and I've spoken to him on the phone, but we never met. He wrote me a very nice letter about my book.

My book was translated into Italian by a brother of a pupil of Longhi's, and the book was sort of censored. I insisted, thank God, on reading the Italian translation in proof, and I found various changes made. They were slight, but I remember one change that struck me very much. Somewhere I said, "Nonetheless, Tiepolo, the greatest artist of the eighteenth century . . . ," or something like that, and this was changed to something like, "Tiepolo, the most prolific artist." I said to [Longhi's pupil, the sister of the translator], "I didn't say he was prolific. I said he was the greatest." And she said, "Oh well, we don't admire Tiepolo much." So I couldn't help saying, "We?" They spoke of themselves like that, you know—"We the Longhians," as it were. And then she said to me, in a perfectly nice way, "Professor Longhi is surprised that you don't have much more about Caravaggio in your book." Caravaggio is Longhi's great hero, of course. I said, "Well, you know, my book begins in 1623 and at that point Caravaggio had been dead for twelve years, so I couldn't put much more in about him." And she said, "Well, you know, we think that you ought to have



begun it earlier, to have more on Caravaggio."

So the Longhians had decided that Caravaggio was a great artist and Tiepolo was a kind of fascist artist, you know, things of that kind, and that was all rather fun; I enjoyed those kinds of battles. It was totally different from England, because that kind of discussion would have been meaningless, as would the political arguments like, you know, "What will happen if the Italians go communist? Should they go communist?" and all the rest of it. I mean, in England no one ever thought anything or anyone was going to go communist, and there was no question of wasting one's time in discussing it. [laughter]

SMITH: Harold Acton is a person you mentioned as being important for you in terms of your studying in Naples and Florence.

HASKELL: Yes, Florence more. I did read his books on Naples of course, but they weren't terribly important to me. I think I read more about Florence, really, because even though Acton wasn't a great historian or anything, he did almost invent seventeenth-century Florence, in a sense. I was brought up, I suppose, like everyone in the world at the time, and possibly, for all I know, probably still, to think that Florence started and ended with Dante and the artists of the Renaissance.

[Tape III, Side One]

SMITH: It's often said, particularly perhaps in the U.S., that contemporary art





history or modern art history is a German-founded discipline. In your case that's not terribly true.

HASKELL: No.

SMITH: But one of the things we are interested in looking at in this series is the variety of ways in which the German émigrés interacted and influenced or failed to influence the national traditions of the countries where they went, primarily the U.K. and the U.S., though we did do one interview vis à vis Canada. Of course you were at the Warburg.

HASKELL: I had a reader's card, but I never had a job there. It was certainly what you might call my spiritual home, yes. When I say Gombrich and other people weren't terribly interested in what I did, it wasn't in any mean-spirited way, because they were terrifically encouraging and helpful, but I don't think that they themselves thought that this was the most important or most interesting thing that could be happening in art history. This didn't stop me from being totally intoxicated by the library and by the atmosphere of the whole place. You could just cross from one subject to another in that library; you could find a biography or a book on the history of science, or whatever it might be, in the same place. All this did have an enormous effect on me. It's not a compliment anyone would give me, but I would terribly, terribly like to feel that my books were in some way sort of Warburgian.



I wrote a piece recently about the contributions of Continental art historians to art history in England in the nineteenth century, and it was dedicated to the Warburg. I feel that without them I certainly couldn't have existed. Perhaps that's too melodramatic but I wouldn't have felt the same sort of excitement and enthusiasm, certainly not at the Courtauld; that would have been unthinkable. At the Courtauld what I was doing would have been looked upon as utterly absurd sort of gossip. No one gave that sort of indication at the Warburg. It's just that I think they felt that there were more interesting things to be doing.

SMITH: [John] Summerson at a couple of points in his interview actually described himself as a "German."

HASKELL: Gosh, there's no one less German than John Summerson, I would have thought.

SMITH: Well, he meant figuratively, in art history.

HASKELL: Yes, but I wouldn't have thought even that. The German language has always been by far my weakest point, whereas French and Italian, almost from the start, I could read much like I read English. German came much, much later and is still not something I would read for pleasure. I do have to read certain German articles and dip into books and so on, but I would not just settle down with a German book. In those days, and even to some extent now, not very many of the major German art historians had been to America or written a





lot in English. Wölfflin had been translated and Panofsky of course wrote a lot once he'd gone to America, but otherwise, I don't know who Summerson had in mind when he spoke of this German tradition behind him.

SMITH: I would have to presume studying Alois Riegl and [Max] Dvořák and [August] Schmarsow, but I don't know for a fact.

HASKELL: Certainly that wouldn't be true of me in the sense that there were so few of their writings that I could even read in that way. This sounds like mysticism—I suppose even the most rational art historians are allowed a bout of mysticism—but I think just going into the Warburg Institute itself and seeing the library made one colossally aware of a great, great intellectual tradition which one knew did come from Germany, a tradition which didn't exist anywhere else. So it is in that way that I most certainly feel indebted to the German tradition, rather than through the direct influence of Riegl or Dvořák, or whoever it might be.

SMITH: [David] Watkin makes this distinction between the German-influenced art historians and what he terms the "nativist antiquarians." I think [John] Betjeman is one of the names that he mentioned.

HASKELL: I don't think I'd like to be either, really. A person who did make a big impact on me was, you might say, a German and a Warburgian without being a German and a Warburgian was [Arnaldo] Momigliano. He was not an art



historian but he wrote on classical antiquity. He died about three or four years ago.

SMITH: The Italian scholar?

HASKELL: That's right, yes, but he was very closely associated with the Warburg; he was always there. And certainly he was a German, if you want, in the Summersonian sense. He was a Jew and he was persecuted and he had to leave Italy, but when he was a young boy he had gone to Munich especially to meet the great German historians of antiquity and to learn German. He brought the German tradition into a form that was very easily accessible for me (a) because it was written in Italian, and (b) because he wrote very lucidly, in a very, very nontheoretical way. He was a Marxist, but he was very good at explaining other people's ideas.

You know, the last thing I want to do is deny a debt to a great German intellectual tradition, but equally I haven't got the right to claim it in the sense that I didn't know enough about it.

SMITH: You mentioned that while you were friendly with Blunt, you didn't seem to have very much intellectual exchange with him. What about Kenneth Clark?

HASKELL: Kenneth Clark I did know, but he wasn't a man who really liked having intellectual exchanges with someone like myself. Already by the time I



got to know him he had really rather defiantly renounced scholarship. He did say something like, "Scholarship is like knitting. It's quite all right to do, but it's just ultimately rather pointless," or something like that. He was doing this in a rather aggressive way. When I wrote *Rediscoveries in Art* he wrote to me about that and he was always very, very friendly to me, but I was never on close terms with him. I don't think anyone of my generation actually had real intellectual exchanges with Kenneth Clark.

SMITH: What about Summerson?

HASKELL: I knew him and liked him, but by the time I knew him he was a terrific eccentric; he had this huge ear trumpet. Did you interview him?

SMITH: We started to, but the whole thing just didn't work because of his emphysema, and then he died.

HASKELL: I just met him and I didn't really know him at all seriously well.

SMITH: Frances Yates of course was a Warburgian.

HASKELL: Yes, I adored her as a person. She was a most engaging, wonderfully eccentric, delightful person to meet, and some of her books I terrifically like. I don't think I read them early enough for them to have made a difference in the way that I wrote, but the one I like best is *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, which is a book that I think a lot of people don't approve of or agree with. It is the way I do like history to be written; in other words, it does





become exciting and real people do become involved in ideas and the historical past is understood in its own terms. I think I most dislike the idea of art history being interpreted entirely through contemporary prejudices, if you see what I mean. I do like to go back to try and understand what people felt. I think that's really why this *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, or whatever it is that I do, does interest me—just to see what something meant at the time.

The highest praise the Longhians could give to any artist was to say that he anticipated some later artist. I remember them saying, "Velázquez here seems to anticipate Manet," or something, and this infuriated me (a) because Velázquez seemed to me a thousand times greater artist than Manet in any case, and (b) it seemed to me a sort of nonsensical idea. Manet was a great artist and it makes perfect sense to me to say that Manet saw Velázquez and was much inspired by him or influenced by him, but to say that "Velázquez anticipates Manet" enrages me; it was very much a Longhi mannerism. I think I know now why all the Italians did this. They were desperately trying to react against Italian chauvinist provincialism under Mussolini and they were trying to bring Italian art into the modern world, if you see what I mean. If they could say that some Italian baroque artist was like an impressionist before his time, this was the thing they most liked doing. But that kind of historical writing used to enrage me, and still does, really.



SMITH: But that sort of thinking actually was quite dominant in the United States in art history—the "main line" as Meyer Schapiro referred to it.

HASKELL: Yes, well, Meyer Schapiro is a great man and so on, but he is a man, I think, who doesn't like any challenge to the idea of the steady move forward of modern art. The most painful social occasion in my life was when I gave a lecture in New York and Meyer Schapiro very kindly came and sat next to my wife during the lecture. This was a lecture which has been republished in another form called "Enemies of Modern Art." So Meyer came in and sat next to my wife, and at the end—my wife reported this to me afterwards—he never said a word to her and never clapped. It was just bad luck that both of them were sitting next to each other because we had to go and have dinner with Schapiro and his wife the next evening—he'd already asked us. We went and we had a perfectly nice evening, but never once did he mention the lecture. We talked about absolutely everything under the sun. It was very difficult, you know . . . as if I had a mosquito bite or something I wanted to scratch. I kept on wanting to say, "I know you hated it but do you . . . ?" But we both avoided it absolutely, like the plague, and we ended up on perfectly cordial, friendly terms, as it were. I think that was probably the last time I saw him, actually.

One of the things he did deeply resent about my talk was the idea that there could be any kind of alternative view to his own. He gave the Slade





lectures here very, very early, when I first came to Oxford, and I don't like to criticize him because he clearly is a great scholar, but he was doing this thing which infuriated me at the time, trying to show that late Monet was in fact exactly like Jackson Pollock. It's terribly easy to do. If you blow up a detail of a Monet and put it next to a Jackson Pollock you can see it. At that time a whole series of books on Turner appeared, which were claiming that late Turner was in fact anticipating abstract expressionism. I remember writing quite a stiff review of them in the *New York Review of Books*. It is a kind of writing that I'm deeply antagonistic to, but equally it does make me, I'm afraid, terribly reactionary about things like feminist history now. A real case can be made, and this is not what I'm discussing, about feminists saying (a) they always have been badly treated in the past (b) they're still badly treated and (c) they should be given power, all this sort of thing. But the one thing that absolutely infuriates me is when you twist the past to make it seem as though it was like the present. And my reaction against it is not misogynist, antiwomen, or anything else, but it is exactly on the same level as my reaction against this idea that Velázquez is anticipating Manet, or something of that kind. People cannot understand that once upon a time, everyone, men and women alike, looked upon men as superior. This may have been terribly regrettable, unfortunate, cruel and everything else, but you just can't change that. The rewriting of history in that



way does offend me terribly. I think it's one of my great historical credos, if I can put it that way.

SMITH: But when we get into art history, sometimes those kinds of things get into questions of evaluation.

HASKELL: Yes, enormously. I can't remember whether I was arguing in something I'd written or by word of mouth, but somewhere I was arguing that in evaluating a painter or an artist, what happened after him should be of no consequence whatsoever and should be ignored. Henri Zerner, in a review of me or in conversation—I can't honestly remember now—said that I was completely wrong about this. He said one has to understand what happened afterwards to understand the greatness of the painter. I still think I'm right, but that's another matter.

SMITH: You did write in "Enemies of Modern Art" that we are all, to a varying degree, revisionists, which strikes me as something actually quite typical of the generation that matured in the 1950s, in a way; the need to question the verities that prevailed.

HASKELL: Yes, I think what you're saying is very true. I don't think I'd have quite thought of it in that way, but hearing you say it, I think it's more than likely, yes.

SMITH: The way you were describing your development, it sounds like that



revisionism was not a change but actually a part of the intellectual life of King's College that you were part of.

HASKELL: Yes, again, I think you're probably right. It is very, very difficult, even if worthwhile, to try and work out exactly one's own intellectual development, and I don't think I am capable of doing that, but I'm certainly not denying that what you're saying is more than possible and likely. It would even be rather worrying, in a way, if it wasn't, because it would mean the whole Cambridge experience had meant nothing to me, and it did mean a great deal to me, even if I can't always trace exactly the forms it did take.

SMITH: But it's curious to me that on the one hand there's a group of people that might be stereotyped as the "angry young men" for whom revisionism is an act of rebellion, and then there is what is happening with you and perhaps the Cambridge group, where revisionism is an act of continuity.

HASKELL: It's strange, but I think it's true. Putting it that way, I entirely agree that it sounds strange, but I don't think there's any reason why strange things shouldn't happen, if I can put it that way. I think it's perfectly possible. Someone like David Watkin, I suppose, is in that way the archrevisionist. I don't know if you know him, but the one thing no one would ever call him would be an angry young man, if you see what I mean. His dream would be to be an Anglican bishop or a Catholic bishop of around 1850 or something, you know.





So I think that revisionism can do that, but I agree that it can also completely want to rewrite. And all the feminists that I've talked about also are in their own way, revisionists, rewriting history in that way.

SMITH: In the fifties and sixties, were you aware of intellectual life as being sort of overstructured by several overprominent ideas? Marxism might be one, the modern art hierarchy might be another.

HASKELL: Yes. When I first went to Italy it was [Benedetto] Croce. Everyone was talking about Croce. I remember being in Rome when Croce died and he was everything, and then of course it all changed to [Antonio] Gramsci. Gramsci was already dead, but nonetheless. It wasn't the Communist Party, or [Palmiro] Togliatti—no one had any serious intellectual respect for Togliatti. You could say he was a powerful man and a leader, but he wasn't *the* man. Gramsci was the great figure and I remember this feeling that there was a completely dominating ideology outside of which it was felt totally wrong to stray. The Italians were perfectly prepared to have very, very interesting, worthwhile and even fruitful discussions within these limits, but you couldn't stray outside them. I don't actually think that was true in England. I don't think that there was this kind of very dominant ideology in England. Eric Hobsbawm was a leading Marxist scholar in England, and he's a great friend of mine, I see him a great deal now. At that time he was certainly a Communist



Party member, and we used to have great fights, but they were fights over actual things happening, like the Russian invasion of Hungary. They weren't ideological fights about Marxism. I don't remember that happening much in England because I don't think there was much of a dominating ideology. I think it was a feeling that England was shrinking and getting less and less and less significant. I remember the time of Suez, this tremendous feeling that England was vanishing, not only as a great political power, but even as a great intellectual power. I don't remember feeling constrained in my thoughts or discussions or arguments or beliefs, or even friendships, in England, or the feeling that there was a sort of dominating ideology there, but I think that might well have been the case in Italy, and indeed still is, to some extent.

SMITH: Was there a Focillon tradition?

HASKELL: Not at all. Focillon was to me like a complete, total mystery. I don't think I'd ever heard of him, frankly, until about twenty years ago. I know in America he had a huge impact on some people and he had a huge impact on Jean Seznec, at Oxford, who used to be a kind of Focillonite, so to speak. Then I read him, and to be honest it just totally passed me by. I mean, we can talk about the Germans, the Warburg, and all sorts of things, but Focillon—absolutely not, not in the slightest. I still don't quite understand it, but he really has passed me by.





SMITH: Did you know André Chastel?

HASKELL: Yes. I had to write his obituary when he died a couple of years ago. My meeting with André Chastel was a very, very strange one. Afterwards, we became very good friends. I met him in Venice. I had written a review for an English paper of a small book that he'd done on Italian art, which was full of mistakes, it really was. When one's young one's rather pleased to write a devastating review of an older man's book, you know, which people are now going to do with me. So, in that terrible way which I now try *never* to do, I wrote a pretty hostile review of it. And then there was a conference in Venice. It was just after I had married Larissa. The conference was on the Guardi brothers—there had been an exhibition. Chastel was there and I was there, and we were both invited out to dinner by someone I knew quite well, a rather famous Venetian hostess. She sent her motor launch for us at our hotel and I greeted Chastel. I knew who he was and what he'd written, of course. I shook hands with him and he looked icy and I think he refused to shake my hand. Then he said, "I know exactly why you wrote that review of me. You wrote it because you're in the pay of Wildenstein." You know, [Georges] Wildenstein was the great dealer who was the absolute enemy of all the Louvre people and the French art establishment. I was totally bewildered by this. I couldn't understand it. I'd never met Wildenstein. The whole thing seemed utterly crazy. Then we went to

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this dinner party and there were a lot of other people there and luckily I wasn't sitting next to Chastel, but when we had to go back to our hotel it was very, very difficult because we just didn't talk.

I went back to the hotel and really spent half the night—almost like Tatyana in *Evgeny Onegin*—writing a letter to Chastel, saying something like, "Dear Professor Chastel, I was very shaken by our discussion. I am not denying for a single second that I wrote the review, and I didn't like the book and I thought it wrong and I can understand that you would be angry about this. I'll certainly not talk to you if you want, but you really must believe me. The idea that I got money from Wildenstein is absolutely unimaginable." I spent until about four in the morning writing endless drafts, trying to get it right, and trying to do it in French and get it perfect and all the rest of it, and then I left it in his pigeonhole downstairs in the lobby of the hotel and then went to bed.

I went to the conference the next day, and in the morning he sat in a different part of the room. Then in the afternoon there was some excruciatingly boring paper given by someone on some aspect of Guardi, when I suddenly felt a tap on my shoulder at the back. It was Chastel. There was a sort of wild moment when I thought he was going to call me out for a duel or something of that kind. He said, "Follow me." So I did and we went next door, and he said to me, "I've thought about it, and I completely accept your word. I was



overagitated and I was annoyed by your review, but of course I take your word completely." After that we became great friends and he invited me to deliver lectures at the Collège de France and I used to see him in Paris and Italy a lot and I liked him very, very much indeed. We got on very well.

To be totally honest, I don't think he was a great art historian, but he was immensely important for the French, and I think they've thrown away all of his tradition, unfortunately. He did owe everything to the Warburg, really; without the Warburg he really wouldn't have existed. I think in German terms and possibly even in London terms he would have been what you might call a minor Warburgian. But in French terms he did assume major importance because he was doing something so different from what the French were doing. Then he trained all these people and they all pay endless homage to him and to my mind they absolutely betray everything he did, because he was the great person who broke French art history free from this paralyzing narcissism and chauvinism. He wrote mostly about Italian art, and now that he's dead, all they do is produce exhibition catalogs of French art and do lectures on French art history and write about French art history and so on, as if Chastel had never existed, so I think it's rather a lost cause, in a way. But I liked him very much.

SMITH: There are several other names that pop up in your writings as people who seem to be part of your community. You mentioned Rylands. Did you





continue in a collegial relationship with him?

HASKELL: Well, you see, as long as I was in King's College I did, of course. At that time I wasn't married. We're now talking about the late fifties, and I was at King's first of all as a research fellow, then I had to teach in the newly-established department, living as a bachelor, which he was also. I saw him absolutely nonstop every day, and he had friends in the country who sometimes would invite me to come and stay, so I was very close to him. Then I got married and I introduced Larissa, my wife, to him and she adored him and still does, and I think he was genuinely fond of her. But of course the minute I moved out of college and moved in with my wife, who had just come from Russia, obviously I spent very little time at the college. I didn't want to leave her alone in the evenings, so we'd have Rylands around to dinner and he might have us to dinner, but it wasn't the same. Of course very soon after that I went to Oxford, because I was married in '65 and came here in '67. Since then, whenever I go back to Cambridge I see Rylands, and indeed I went to about three ninetieth-birthday parties for him last year. I'm still enormously fond of him and see him whenever I can, but it's about two or three times a year at the most, I suppose. He was, in a way, enormously important for me, yes. But when you're young, especially if you colossally like or are attracted in a certain way by someone, it isn't so much what they actually teach you. He did teach me a lot



about the beauty of the English language and poetry and so on, but when I was a pupil of his I was so terribly keen to please him that I used to work doubly and trebly hard to produce my essays. I did much, much more than I would have done for someone who might have actually taught me more but for whom I had less admiration and respect, and, indeed, in a way, love. So he was very, very important in that way.

SMITH: Ellis Waterhouse seems to be a name that reoccurs.

HASKELL: Yes. He was a very, very difficult man, but he was extremely nice to me. He was the opposite of a lot of people in the sense that he was absolutely intolerable to people of his own generation and older than him, and the famous and well established. He was awful to them, but very, very encouraging to the young, and particularly, in a way, people who hadn't done anything much. I had done quite a lot, but I was notably younger than he was, a completely different generation. He was anti-Semitic by nature, by temperament, but never, ever in an awful way. He'd make gentle cracks, but not in a way that used to worry me. He was very nice to me and very affable, and he had this phenomenal knowledge of English collections and how the aristocracy worked, which is fearfully complicated, you know, and terribly important if you're trying to write Namier-type art history. He was enormously generous in sharing that sort of information with younger people.

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I dedicated *Rediscoveries in Art* to him. He had a huge collection of sale catalogs, which have now all gone to the Getty [Center for the History of Art and the Humanities] and he used to mark them and write them up and I could go and ask him if the Duke of St. Albans owned a Titian portrait of somebody or other in 1846 or something, and he'd say, "Just a minute," and go off and look. He loved doing that and was terrifically generous and would lend one his catalogs to be photocopied and anything of that kind. In that way he was extremely nice to me, and he loved telling terribly tiresome jokes the whole time and drawing attention to himself. He could be maddening to his colleagues and certainly to people like Kenneth Clark, whom he loathed, and Dennis Mahon—he hated all of those people. He had an absolutely obsessional hatred of the art trade. Once or twice it was extremely embarrassing because I'd invite him somewhere and there would be someone there he didn't like, and he could behave terribly badly and rudely. But to me and to younger people he couldn't have been more generous and nice.

There's something else I ought to say about him. I did say it in a little piece I wrote about him for an exhibition in a London gallery held a few years ago, after his death. The only book on Italian baroque art in English almost was this list of Roman baroque painters, published by the British School in Rome in a very austere dark green binding, and it was a very difficult book to get hold of; it



was out of print. I suppose about 250 or 300 copies were produced around 1938, then after the war it was very difficult to get hold of and I desperately needed it. This was in the days before photocopying became generally available. I managed to get hold of the last copy, I think, by writing to the British School in Rome itself, and they found one. I've still got it. Then a new edition was produced afterwards and now I've got them both.

Certain places in Rome in those days, especially the Palazzo Farnese, where they have the great Annibale Carracci frescoes, were only open between nine and ten on Sunday morning, and you used to recognize people there, in a way, because they had Ellis Waterhouse's green book on baroque painters in Rome under their arms; it was like a kind of passport or something. You recognized what must be an art historian who'd managed to beg, borrow or steal a copy of this book. So they would do the round of the churches, which were only open on Sunday morning, and there'd be extraordinary things: left altar by so-and-so, some unknown artist.

I was living in Rome when Ellis came back there for the first time since before the war. He didn't go back to Rome until the fifties. He got in touch with me, or I got in touch with him, and we went around the Roman churches. We spent hour after hour walking around and he hadn't been back I'd say for about fifteen years. As we'd go into the most obscure churches he'd say, "I



think you'll find, in the second chapel on the left, there's an altarpiece by Pietro di- or Giovanni di-something or other," you know, some total unknown. And there always was; I mean, he was always right. Then after every church we'd go and sit in a little café and order a glass of white wine. He was a terrific drinker, and I enjoy that also. God knows how many glasses of white wine we drank that day but he was just absolutely astonishing, and that taught me a terrific kind of lesson. So he was very, very important to me in that way, yes.

SMITH: Another person, I guess of his generation or maybe a little younger, was Benedict Nicolson.

HASKELL: Ah, yes. He was a real friend. Ellis was very nice but Ben was a very, very close friend, whom I still genuinely miss very much indeed. I made him come to Russia with me to see Larissa before I married her. It was all going to be such a problem marrying her, I needed some sort of moral support, and Ben was the person I liked most so I said, "I'd like you to meet her." So he came with me, and you can't get much more than that in friendship, if you see what I mean. He was totally antiwomen, very homosexual. He was married but his marriage was a disaster.

I met Ben in 1954 or 1955. It was before Suez. I met him, I suppose, because I wrote an article for the *Burlington Magazine* and sent it to him out of the blue—I don't think I'd met him before—and he said to come around and talk





about it. I think we genuinely liked each other very quickly. He used to run a lunch club in London with Philip Toynbee, who was, you know, quite a well-known English writer at the time. They ran this jointly, and we used to meet once a fortnight in a London restaurant called Bertorelli. We had incredibly bad food and incredibly bad wine, but it was very nice and jolly and there were a lot of writers and Ben asked me almost immediately to come as his guest and then to join, and I remember one tremendous discussion about Suez. Anyway, after that we became really great friends and I'd see a lot of him whenever I went to London. Then when I married he became a great friend of my wife, and he used to come and stay with both of us. We both constantly talk about him. He used to press the doorbell as if the police were coming or something—he'd hold onto it—which would actually wake up or disturb the whole street. He stayed with us a lot, and we stayed once or twice with him in Italy. I really was very, very fond of him. He was extremely generous and kind and helpful to me.

This sounds rather arrogant coming from me now, but he did tell me himself that the book he wrote about Wright of Derby [*Joseph Wright of Derby: A Painter of Light*], which appeared after *Patrons and Painters* was sort of influenced by my book because he put in a great deal about patronage there. That's what he himself told me, although it sounds rather arrogant for me to say that. I used to talk to him about everything, about exhibitions, about pictures we



liked and disliked, art historians we liked and disliked, and books we'd both read—all that. I don't think the kinds of books I wrote were very much affected by him, but he did read *Patrons and Painters* and he made one or two vital suggestions, not in terms of my approach, but in terms of its organization. I remember what was going to be the first chapter ended up as the fourth chapter or something. He said it would just be too sticky to begin in that way, and he was absolutely dead right. He had a very, very good instinct for this sort of thing, and for articles. His corrections for articles were always to the point and right. I always welcomed his criticism and advice.

SMITH: But, again, it sounds like you're saying that these friendships were just sort of general. There did not seem to be a groundswell of interest in your particular approach, with people saying, "Yes, this is quite vital, what you're doing."

HASKELL: I'm just wondering whether this is some terrible reflection on me, or I'm the only person who thinks this about themselves. I hope what I'm telling you is the truth; it's certainly the truth as I see it. Ben himself, you see, had a great Marxist residue behind him. I remember him saying, "You can't say that, Francis!" He'd been very much impressed by [Frederick] Antal, this Marxist Hungarian. Through Ben I knew Antal's wife, or widow. Antal was already dead by then.





[Tape III, Side Two]

SMITH: I would think, in principle, that Marxists would love patronage studies.

HASKELL: Well, you would think so, but a lot of what I did do didn't really agree with what ought to have happened, according to the Marxists. I was constantly finding dukes who liked pictures that they oughtn't to have liked, or something that ought to have been a Jesuit thing which the Jesuits were actually against. To them, what I was doing didn't really fit into the kind of "schema," to use a Gombrich word, of art history that was expected. I think they'd have liked the patronage studies Antal himself did in his Hogarth book, but they were enormously different from mine because they were totally impersonal. I remember saying this in a review I did of Antal's book after his death. It was edited by his widow, and art-historical widows are a terrifying breed. When I retire I'll write about the lives of art-historical widows. I have some real hair-raising stories. Anyway, I wrote the review very, very politely, with enormous respect for Antal, but his kind of patronage studies consisted of comparisons between the pictures Hogarth painted for the aristocracy, where the children were shown as well behaved, and pictures he painted for the bourgeoisie, where one was allowed to see the children behaving in a naughty way. It was a kind of patronage, but it didn't involve studying who the actual individuals were—something I believe in passionately. If you go through the Antal book



carefully, you'll find that half the people he generically included as aristocracy were not; they were just merchants.

So it was patronage studies, but on an anonymous base. Just as there's art history without names, as in the stylistic approach of Wölfflin, you could have patronage without individuals. If we can go back to Namier, he was looked upon as and indeed was to some extent, an extreme right-wing anti-Marxist for doing just that. I don't think I've got any of Namier's political views, at least I hope not, but I don't think it's an approach the Marxists would like, whether it's Namier's or my own.

SMITH: When you started working, how did you assess the state of patronage studies? Did you even know you were doing patronage studies?

HASKELL: Well, yes. I did look around to see if there were any models, or a prototype of that kind of thing, but I didn't find any. There was a book by [Martin] Wackernagel [*The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market*], about fifteenth-century Florence, which was published by Princeton in an English translation about ten or fifteen years ago, and I read it then, but I certainly hadn't read it when I worked on my own book. Of course I did find articles on individual patrons, I'm not claiming that that wasn't the case, but this is where I go back to my idea of being against theory but pro ideas. Everyone has fantasies about themselves, but I'd like to



think that my book did differ from previous ventures into the field by having ideas; as anyone knows, the very selection of material involves an idea. Some of the reviews for my last book [*History and Its Images*] do more or less say it's positivist, but they don't quite realize that if no one has done something before, just who you choose to discuss does involve an idea. I may be fantasizing about this, but I don't think people had discussed patronage in terms of ideas before. There had been lots of articles identifying great patrons; you could find that sort of thing easily. No one's going to claim that I invented patronage, but I don't think people had brought these figures together in a different form, trying to get not a theoretical Antalian sort of thing, but rather "ideas by selection" and a suggestion of how things might work.

SMITH: As you were doing your work, was that how you assessed the situation?

HASKELL: I did feel a real terrific sense of excitement when I realized that what was in a Jesuit church wasn't necessarily Jesuit art, and that, in a way, was against the notion that art history should be confined to connoisseurship alone.

What I've always argued, and I tell this to pupils and everyone else, is that despite what art historians say, the "eye" is not enough for art historians. I mean the eye is very, very important; I'm not deriding it for connoisseurship and so on, but for art history it really isn't enough. You just have to know what happened and you have to know the documents. And I think that did come to





me, not exactly as a revelation but as a moment of huge excitement. I did feel then that I had a sort of key that was going to be of real use. I suppose I did feel that what I was doing was something new. As far as I know, anyone who'd written about the Jesuits did assume that you went into a Jesuit church, you saw the art that was there, and you then asked how it reflected the Jesuits or how it did not reflect the Jesuits. But I don't know of anyone who'd gone in and said, "Did the Jesuits have anything to do in this?"

SMITH: Let's step back a little bit and see how that idea developed. Did you go into the church expecting to see Jesuit art?

HASKELL: Yes. Absolutely. I was staying with an Italian family and on the first day I wanted to go into the Jesuit church and it was closed, the way Roman churches can be. I went back to the family I stayed with and at dinner I told them about my terrible disappointment at finding the church closed. I struggled along in Italian, because the arrangement was that I should teach the daughter English for a couple of hours a day and then the rest of the time I'd speak Italian. Then they told me that all Roman churches were shut in the afternoon from twelve till five, and if I went in the morning or after five, I would find it open, which indeed I did, the following day.

The door was open but there was a kind of leather hanging in front of it. It was quite hot in Rome and noisy with the traffic outside, and you sort of



pushed past this [hanging] and then came into this cool, relatively quiet church. I looked around and at first I did think, "Well, yes this is Jesuit art. This is the real thing. This is just what I'm here to study." I went into the other Jesuit churches in the same state of mind. And I suppose then I did read St. Ignatius, and I began to think about this a bit. Then I thought I must begin reading the lives of the artists, so I started with that.

SMITH: You mean Vasari?

HASKELL: Well, this was mainly seventeenth century, so [I read] the equivalents—[Gian Petro] Bellori, [Giovanni] Baglione, [Lione] Pascoli. In these accounts there always seemed to be little things that didn't quite work. I can't remember the exact example, but there were stories that indicated that so-and-so artist painted for the Duke of so-and-so, who wanted to put the work in the chapel and the good fathers—in other words, the Jesuits—didn't particularly want it. It was sort of what I call coded information.

SMITH: And this was in the accounts of the lives of the artists.

HASKELL: In the lives, yes, but very cautiously put, and that struck me as already quite interesting because it just went against the grain a bit. Then I got permission to work in the actual Jesuit archives, but it was with terrific difficulty. There was always someone there to make sure I didn't see certain things. It was very, very exciting. These were things from the early seventeenth century, and





you'd have thought it was the 1950s. There couldn't have been any terrible state secrets. There's no freedom of information act among the Jesuits, I can assure you. It was all very difficult, but, nonetheless, there was a very, very nice Jesuit art historian, who was very friendly and encouraging, a man called Padre Pirri. He was a kind of antiquarian, who wrote very useful articles about Jesuit woodcarvers— perfectly respectable and knowledgeable. I used to talk with him a bit, and he allowed me to see things.

It was quite interesting because I found that Jesuits actually complained about works of art in the church and in letters among themselves I would find them saying something like, "When the ceilings were painted the holy fathers wanted it to remain simple and white, but His Highness insisted on something else." Then it came almost as a flash. It suddenly seemed to me that if one was going to do this kind of study it was absolutely useless just to base it on the art itself. I thought the same thing about any kind of patronage, and that's why I didn't publish my thesis; I felt it would apply to anything thereafter—collections or anything else. I just had to find the actual mechanics of how patronage worked, and that did involve, if you want, empirical studies. But I think, or at least I hope, there was an idea behind it.

SMITH: Did you come to doubt the validity of a concept such as "Jesuit art"?

HASKELL: Yes, totally. I think it's meaningless, in a way. I always tell my

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pupils who are doing the nineteenth century now to never use the word "bourgeois," because it's sort of meaningless, almost, in the context of nineteenth-century art, because there's almost no alternative to it. I mean, the proletariat is not going to commission art.

SMITH: No, but you do have the aristocracy. In the Third Republic you could have an aristocratic art and a bourgeois art.

HASKELL: In the Third Republic? What was aristocratic art in the Third Republic?

SMITH: Well, I'm not sure, but one could think of the Goncourts, for example, as being part of the aristocracy rather than the bourgeoisie.

HASKELL: They were very, very bourgeois. They helped to propagate a taste in art that was then taken up by the very rich, including some aristocrats, but mainly it was taken up by rich bankers like the Rothschilds. I suppose the Rothschilds would now count as aristocracy, but I don't know if that would be true in the 1860s. They were still quite nouveau riche, in a way. I think you can easily talk about an expensive and a nonexpensive art, which I genuinely believe has real importance. I also believe that the study of fashion in taste is of real importance. But I don't believe in the concept of blocks, like "the Jesuits." I agree, for the eighteenth century to what extent there was such a thing as bourgeois art or not is a problem of genuine interest, but I don't think it's ever



been properly tackled.

SMITH: When you get into questions of individual collectors, there are figures such as [Benjamin] Altman, for example, who obviously have an idea that's driving them as they're collecting, yet you certainly can't say that the paintings represent that idea. The collector's idea can't exist outside of the paintings, but the paintings certainly exist outside of the idea.

HASKELL: Of course yes, yes. I tremendously enjoyed doing that article ["The Benjamin Altman Bequest"]; it was great fun, but it was pure accident. The Metropolitan [Museum of Art] invited me over to do this for their centenary, or whatever it was, and they opened all the archives to me and there was all this very confidential Berenson material, which was enormously fascinating, and I got rather intrigued by Altman. I developed a sort of vague idea that he was rather interested in these German merchant pictures of the sixteenth century, that he might have seen these sort of prototypes, but I don't really terribly believe this. The only thing I can say is that he wasn't in any way a man who was interested in unconventional art. In other words, he did anything to get a Rembrandt, but he wouldn't have been at all interested in trying to buy an El Greco, which he could have bought, and which certain American collectors were buying. Again, I hate this kind of progressive view of art history, but one can't deny that the Havermeyers were buying much more imaginatively in America, and they were





more or less contemporaries of Altman's.

SMITH: Then there's the question of the advisers I suppose, and how one tracks down what the ideas were that motivated the advisers.

HASKELL: I think that's enormously important, but terribly difficult. I touched on that a bit in *Rediscoveries in Art* because I just happened to find out that there's a letter that lists just who was advising each particular English aristocrat, but one would have to go much, much further into that to discover anything. If I can put it as an idea that I would claim some credit for, at that time, English taste went sort of backwards rather than forwards because the opportunities for buying the kind of pictures that the English had always wanted to buy were not present. When the English went on their grand tours, in the seventeenth and mainly the eighteenth centuries, everyone in Italy and France and elsewhere said the English were buying up everything, like the Americans or Japanese now, as it were. This of course was absolutely untrue. The English were buying everything they could, but they couldn't buy 99 percent of what they wanted to buy because it wasn't available. Many works of art were restricted by inheritance laws and the Roman aristocracy couldn't sell. Similarly, even if today the [J. Paul] Getty [Trust] had ten times its annual income, it could not at present prices buy a major Botticelli because there just isn't a major Botticelli available. If there was a revolution in England and the the National Gallery was sold or something, it



might be possible, but at the moment, no. So although we complain that the Getty's buying up everything, I know it's not true because they're not buying Raphaels and Botticellis—they can't. The same thing applied to the English in the eighteenth century.

And so the English began developing a taste that was much more independent, forced on them by the circumstances of what was or was not available—if you want, this could be described as Marxist. Then suddenly, as a result of the French Revolution, and Napoleon, all the Raphaels and Correggios the English had wanted to buy during the eighteenth century did become available, so the English dropped all their new ideas and tastes and went completely backwards, if you see what I mean. I think that was a genuine idea about taste in art collecting and how it worked. I think all these advisers, to some extent, were themselves under this influence. Thirty or forty years earlier they might well have told their patron, "Well, as you will never buy a Raphael, why don't you start looking at Italian fifteenth-century art?" There were some cases like that, but once anyone knew they could buy a Raphael, then who the hell cared about fifteenth-century Italian painting? I think that's what happened, really, and I think advisers were affected by this as much as the collectors. But it would certainly be worth going into in much greater detail.

SMITH: That sounds actually like a very materialist explanation.



HASKELL: It is, it is, and when I say this in lectures I always sort of apologize and say I don't want to reduce everything to it, but I think it is to some extent true. At all moments there are certain possibilities of what you can do and what you can't do. At the moment I think the Getty is a particularly interesting example, which I do frequently use in lectures because the Getty is now so much like a very rich English aristocrat in the eighteenth century, extremely well off and buying marvelous things, but on the whole not being able to buy what are regarded as the central masterpieces—you know, the Raphaels and Correggios. But I'm sure this is not because David Jaffé now and George Goldner before and Burton Fredericksen before that had a particularly individual taste and wanted to buy unusual things. If a Raphael came on the market they'd immediately buy it, and everything would be back to normal, if you see what I mean.

SMITH: It's been expressed to me by one person that there is a sort of rueful feeling at the Getty that the best they can do, if everything falls in the right places, is build one of the very best second-rate collections in the world.

HASKELL: Yes, well, I think that is totally true. There are the Titians on loan to Edinburgh that belong to the Duke of Sutherland. If those go, then suddenly overnight they'd be transformed, but otherwise I think that is genuinely true. It may be a splendid collection, but compared to the Prado, or even the Hermitage or the National Gallery or the Louvre it will be second rank, because it is no





longer the case that you can buy these absolutely major central things.

SMITH: In concluding today, I wanted to go back to your life at Cambridge in the fifties and sixties. It sounds like this was a very male environment.

HASKELL: Yes. There were women's colleges of course, but women were not allowed into men's colleges after nine o'clock in the evening, or whatever it was. There was a little group of six women, I remember, who wanted to show that women too could be intelligent and everything else, and we used to meet them sometimes for tea, but basically it was an entirely male society, it's perfectly true.

SMITH: When did that start changing, from your memory?

HASKELL: It was after I left, so it was when I was at Oxford. It began happening about fifteen years ago in Oxford.

SMITH: So Oxford when you came here was also totally male?

HASKELL: Totally, when I first came, yes.

SMITH: Although Oxford has a reputation for being more open.

HASKELL: That is true, but it was just by statute. No, it was totally male.

SMITH: To what degree was there foreign involvement in Cambridge, such as Americans?

HASKELL: Well, there were quite a few Americans. One person who became a great friend of mine, more or less at this time and who also knew all our group



fairly well was George Plimpton. He's in New York now and I haven't seen him for a few years, but I used to see him. The first time I ever went to America I stayed in his flat in New York for three or four weeks. I knew him very well. He was at King's, and he edited the *Paris Review*. I interviewed Forster in the first issue of the *Paris Review*.

SMITH: So that would have been in 1954, or something like that?

HASKELL: Probably about that. I've got it at home; I can show it to you. I knew George, and quite a lot of other Americans. There were very few people from Europe. Toward the end of my time in Cambridge, there were one or two French, and a certain number of Indians, from what was then "the British Empire," and Canadians—essentially English-speaking people. It was predominantly male and English speaking.

SMITH: And what about the upward-mobility aspect that is said to dominate postwar education on both sides of the Atlantic. Was that true at Cambridge? Were there working-class men?

HASKELL: Well, there were, yes, and Forster was very, very keen on this. Perhaps this was a very good prejudice, but he would always extend invitations to meet with working-class students. In a slightly self-conscious way, he would say, "You must come around for sherry because I'm having so-and-so, and, you know, he's a bus driver's son." That sort of thing. It wasn't as it had been



earlier—aristocratic society exclusively—because the Labour government, among other things, had insisted on state grants to university students. So there were working-class men, but it would be absolutely hypocritical to deny that that was what you might call the dominant culture in the way that it probably is now. I mean the dominant culture certainly was a sort of upper or upper middle-class culture.

SMITH: Were you a scholarship student as you had been at Eton?

HASKELL: Yes, I was.

SMITH: So your parents didn't have to pay for your—

HASKELL: Well, they had to pay something but not the standard fees, no.

SMITH: So in some ways you were not then the average Cambridge student.

HASKELL: Well, that is true, but King's was always looked upon as rather exceptional, and I suppose most of my friends were on some sort of grant. In those days, you could very easily get some sort of state grant, and I think most people got them. There certainly was a rich society in King's, and indeed elsewhere, to which I did not belong, and we were looked upon as rather enjoyable toys by them, on the whole. I think we were far more intelligent and amusing and interesting than they were, and I think they thought that also, so we would quite often be invited to champagne parties and all the rest of it, and we had quite a jolly time. I knew a lot of them, but they weren't in my really





intimate group of friends.

SMITH: In the States, at Harvard or Princeton, the majority of the students would be from the American aristocracy and happy to get by on what they called a "gentleman's C," and then you had a relatively small group of people who were actually intellectuals or scholars. Of course it was those who got the "gentleman's C" who were going to mature and run the country.

HASKELL: Yes. Ours didn't, really. Actually, to be fair, I don't know if they were necessarily rich. They spent a lot of money, which is not necessarily the same as actually being rich, but most of them didn't really run the country. As quite often happens in England, they went back to farming or managing their estates and that sort of thing. I'm trying to think of the few people I knew at the time, and I can't think of anyone who has become important in that way. The chap I met last night, a sort of top civil servant, was certainly not one of the rich people. He was sort of middle class.

SMITH: How did your circuit of people dress? These might sound like strange questions, but we're asking everyone. Was there a way that you presented yourselves to each other and to the world? For instance, would you always wear a tie?

HASKELL: I think so, probably, yes. And this was long before there was very long hair and earrings and the sort of thing you would see now. I think we



always dressed in a jacket and tie, much as I do now, I suppose.

SMITH: Would blazers or suits be more common?

HASKELL: Blazers—that is a real part of English class distinction. I think blazers were looked upon as a thing which real gentlemen, whether they were rich or not, didn't wear. Some people did wear blazers, but on the whole they might be described as the upwardly mobile. I think I dressed much like this, as far as I remember. I think we all did, yes.

SMITH: Was there a concern about accents?

HASKELL: Well, again, you see, in this group of mine that I'm talking about, no one was properly rich, as it were, but we all had been to public school, and we all did belong to the same social class. In the papers I keep reading the accounts of people who were terribly, terribly miserable at the time because of the snobbery, so I'm sure people did suffer, and possibly did resent the kind of snobbery which they did feel in us. But I can't pretend that there was that feeling among any of us, because as I say we were terribly self-absorbed. Now I don't think college life exists in that way. People know each other across the university and they have girlfriends and their girlfriends sleep with them and all that sort of thing. At that time it really wasn't like that. Of course I knew people from other colleges, but the people I used to see every single day of my life were a limited number—under ten or twelve, and mostly five or six—and

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certainly the accent issue meant nothing to any of us.

SMITH: This was a period when, in theory at least, sexual attitudes were beginning to change.

HASKELL: Sexual mores. Well, I suppose . . . it's awfully difficult to say. I suppose sexual mores, in a way, were quite free, but they were so much more private than they are now, if you see what I mean. I suppose I knew . . . I was going to say I knew every sexual encounter of every friend of mine, which wasn't true, but on the whole I did know what was going on. There was a good deal of homosexuality of one kind or another, but nothing like what you might call the ideological type you get now. There was a lot of fooling around, which almost seems innocent now. I don't know how to put it, because it all sounds so different from what it is now. It had no special sort of significance in the way it does now. It didn't imply a sort of gesture or a statement or whatever, if you see what I mean.

Martin, who was one of these close friends of mine, was an extreme woman's man, as it were, and he was totally, totally tolerant. At King's—especially at King's because of the Forster, Bloomsbury sort of tradition—to disapprove of anyone on grounds of sexual behavior would have been regarded as absolutely terrible. Martin therefore knew exactly what was going on among various contemporaries but didn't care a hoot one way or





another. I remember flocks of girls around Martin during the daytime, including shop girls. You could shut a door from outside and no one could come in, and there were endless jokes about Martin because he was always doing this. So, yes, there was a good deal of freedom. It wasn't, as it's quite often described now, a sort of monastic society in that sense of the word at all.

SMITH: Though just a couple of minutes ago you said, "Nowadays, people have girlfriends," implying that in those days that was uncommon.

HASKELL: Yes, very uncommon. The real distinction I'm making here is that Martin went to bed with lots of girls but he didn't have a girlfriend he lived with, as often happens now. He had a stream of women, including older women, who adored him. He was very good looking and he had sexual affairs, but I'm pretty sure that neither he nor any other people I knew at that time had a regular girlfriend. Perhaps during the holidays there was a sort of steady relationship going, but it wasn't serious at all. Sexuality was changing, but it was far, far more casual—I think that is the right word to use—and it was far less involved, if I can put it that way.

SMITH: So sexuality was compartmentalized and much less central in your overall emotional life?

HASKELL: Yes, I think that's probably true. It was obviously talked about a lot. I mean, when has there ever been a society of young people in which it



hasn't been talked about? But we used to have lots of literary clubs among ourselves in which we'd read papers to each other, and I can't think of anyone at that time who would have given up coming to this because of an affair they were having with someone. Perhaps I'm wildly falsifying, but I think that was the case. There was a lot of casual sex of every kind, but it was secondary activity, if I can put it that way.

SMITH: You have said several times that your group was very self-absorbed, but of course in some ways young people, and perhaps college kids, who are a privileged group, are always self-absorbed.

HASKELL: I think that may well be the case.

SMITH: But how was your generation's self-absorption different from the self-absorption of your students today?

HASKELL: I can't really answer that because I don't know my students today in the way that I could know people at that time. I honestly can't answer that. I sometimes wonder about this myself. It may be that everything I'm saying could apply to everyone, but I get the impression, nonetheless, that our self-absorption was different, partly because we all did see so much of each other the whole time and because there weren't women around; in other words, there wasn't a permanent relationship or quasi-permanent relationship that would take us away from each other. We were, as I say, uninterested in politics and very few of us



belonged to university societies or university political clubs. We belonged to literary clubs. I'm sure I'm right when I'm talking about our group. I may well be wrong in saying it was any different from what's happening now, but I get the impression it was; it's just a bit of a hunch. It is true that I wouldn't really know now, because I'm in my late sixties, I'm married, and I live at home, so I obviously don't see what's going on, but we do see the children of our friends, and when they do come around I talk to them, and I don't get the impression that this kind of group exists today in the way that it did with us.

SMITH: And the groups would more likely cross gender lines today.

HASKELL: Enormously so, yes. That again, I think, is a thing that did change enormously. I saw that when I came back to Cambridge. As I mentioned before, one of the things that changed was America replaced Europe. I think also that homosexuality, in its very widest sense, I mean emotional and not only practicing homosexuality, went out also. The other thing that was new was the appearance of different classes. By then the measures of the Labour government were having an effect, so you did get far more people from different backgrounds. I belonged, in a way, to a last generation of what Cambridge had been, and when I came back I was very, very aware of the fact that it had changed. When I came back people did disapprove of things more; they were more political, and they did think of America. They had steady girlfriends, and





that sort of thing. All that really had changed, and I think you'll find a lot of people would agree with me about that.

SMITH: Did this expansion of the types of people at school lead to a change in the kinds of intellectual questions that were being raised?

HASKELL: Yes. There was one thing that was very, very characteristic of the change I'm talking about. When I was an undergraduate and knew these people, I had never heard of this group of people which has subsequently become enormously famous in England, because of spies and things, a group called the Apostles. I don't know if you've heard of this Bloomsbury group, this sort of secret society.

SMITH: This is like [Guy] Burgess and—

HASKELL: That's right. Well, I can't remember if Burgess . . . Blunt certainly was a member and Forster was also. A lot of them did turn out to be communists and so on, but by no means all of them. The press whipped it up. It was a secret society only in the sense that the members didn't want people desperately trying to get in. Anyway, when I was an undergraduate I'd never ever heard of this group, and I don't think I would have wanted to join even if I had, because my life was more frivolous, I suppose. But quite soon after I came back as a research fellow, I was approached and was elected to the society, and once a week, on Sunday evenings, we used to meet.



SMITH: This is the Apostles?

HASKELL: The Apostles, that's right. We always met in Forster's rooms, and he would sit there, which was rather alarming. You would have to read a paper in advance, and the paper was about a kind of ethical or moral question—it could be political, but not in the sense of party-political. Some of the early papers have been subsequently published because people like [John Maynard] Keynes belonged and other great people of the early part of the twentieth century.

Someone would read a paper, standing on the rug in front of the fire, and Forster was always there. There were about seven or eight of us altogether, and anyone who ever had belonged could come back—anyone who was in Cambridge from previous generations—so sometimes you got terribly grand people like Leonard Woolf, who would sit there, and it was very, very alarming.

SMITH: Now you did not even know that this group existed?

HASKELL: When I was an undergraduate I really didn't know it existed.

SMITH: So it was in many respects a truly secret society?

HASKELL: It was a secret society, but it was never secret in the sense that anything particularly secret was discussed at it. It was secret, if you want, for social reasons, because otherwise it was felt people would feel hurt if they didn't belong. I suppose I might have felt hurt if I had known about it and hadn't belonged. But when I came back I was elected to the society, and then we did



have these meetings every Sunday evening, and we did discuss these ethical questions. Each person had to take a number to talk in turn and then the person who had number one had to get up immediately after the talk and say, "Well, you know, John's paper's very interesting, but I think he's got it all wrong about the moral sanctions for . . . ," or whatever it might be, and we'd talk about that and so on, in turn, and it used to go on for about two or three hours.

SMITH: This sounds, in a sense, like it would require a real grounding in philosophy.

HASKELL: Yes, but of a very nontechnical kind. I remember a paper I read, which you couldn't possibly describe as seriously philosophical, but it was about this very notion of "liberation." I talked about various moments in literature where people have had this feeling, and I even mentioned this friend of mine, Simon Raven, who I said had a great impact on me in this way—I suddenly found conventions being broken and other worlds were possible. Now that couldn't, by any stretch of the imagination, be called a serious philosophical paper, but it was, I suppose, a paper about raising ethical problems—to what extent is this right or wrong and so on. The idea was that everything should be comprehensible to everyone else; in other words, I think it would have been regarded as completely unacceptable if someone had given a paper of a technical, philosophical kind. There were philosophical societies which existed for that very purpose.





[Tape IV, Side One]

SMITH: Was it assumed that all of you had read Plato, for example, so that there could be references to *The Republic* or *The Symposium* or other dialogues?

HASKELL: Well, some. It was assumed that if you talked about the shadows in the cave people would know about that, and it was assumed people would know about the Platonic ideal, the Platonic reality and reflections of it, but you didn't require any specialized knowledge of these things. It was assumed that Plato had entered into the general education which we'd all had, as had Shakespeare and Voltaire.

SMITH: What about Kant or Hegel?

HASKELL: I don't think so, no, because German philosophy really was a special subject, if you see what I mean. What was perfectly possible, and I'm sure it did happen, was that one of the speakers might well have said that Kant, in his *Aesthetics*, or whatever it might be, makes a certain point, and then he would say, "But I don't really agree with it because . . ." So you could easily bring in any of these philosophers, but the assumption was that the paper would not be technical and that everyone should understand it. I'm a very, very undisciplined thinker, as you'll have gathered by now, if I'm even a thinker, as it were, and I used to find some of the papers absolutely torturous. It was the most high-powered thing I ever did at university, and it could be terrifying, especially



when some of these older people were sitting there.

SMITH: I suppose it was particularly terrifying, perhaps, to give the comments?

HASKELL: Yes, absolutely. I think this is also one of the reasons why it was secret. You were under oath not to talk about what was going on. I'm not breaking oaths now, partly because I've forgotten most of the papers that were given, but the point was that you were supposed to give criticism with no holds barred, and it was agreed that no one would be offended. If someone said, "I think Francis Haskell's been talking absolute total rubbish about this," I'd have to grin and bear it. The whole point also was not to fight to win, but to establish the truth.

SMITH: Now was Forster the genius of this group?

HASKELL: Well, Forster used to be extremely quiet. He was frightfully keen on maintaining the meetings in his room. He believed in it tremendously. Do you know Forster's novels? Do you know *The Longest Journey*?

SMITH: Yes, but I haven't read it in a long time.

HASKELL: Well, I don't know if you remember the beginning, but the first few pages of *The Longest Journey* describe this horse in the meadow or something like that, and the question of whether or not the horse is there if you're not there—the Berkeley thing and so on.

SMITH: Right.



HASKELL: Well, that is a bit of the Apostles, as it were. He uses a meeting of the Apostles in the novel. He tremendously believed in it and wanted it to go on, and we all thought, probably in a very arrogant way, that the group was tremendously high-minded and aiming at the truth, and, as I said, aiming at the idea that you could talk to people openly and criticize their ideas without them being offended. I think all that mattered far more than any individual thing that was actually ever said at a meeting. The bonds were meant to be quite close, and indeed they were, and there were annual dinners. I haven't been to the annual dinner for donkeys' years. I'm not sure if it even still goes on now, but I used to go once or twice.

SMITH: Was there something that you got from these meetings that you then carried with you into your professional life in some way?

HASKELL: Not in my professional life as an art historian, but I suppose in what you might call my ethical life, if I may put it that way without sounding too pretentious. I have a general belief that the only way that advances can be made in the world is by a few people genuinely getting together and trying to save civilization by trying to find the truth. I still do believe in fighting against a mass of ignorance and prejudice and so on. Later, the press got hold of information about the group—and everything I'm telling you now you could read in about a dozen books—because Anthony Blunt was among the people who had been





Apostles. I can't remember whether Guy Burgess was a member. I don't think so because it was a very austere sort of group—you didn't drink or anything, except for coffee or tea—and Guy Burgess was always so wild that I somehow doubt if he was there. Blunt certainly was, as were a certain number of other people who turned out to be communists. In the thirties so many people were communists that there were no more communists among the Apostles I think than in any other group.

But when the Blunt affair broke and everyone started analyzing his life, it emerged very quickly that he belonged to the Apostles and then the journalists had the time of their lives talking about this secret society of communists at Cambridge. You can just imagine the sort of thing that was made of it all. The press absolutely loved it, and then people started writing books and articles and so on. But it wasn't nearly as dramatic as described. When I say "secret society" it was only a secret society in the sense that you'd talk about things that would have bored three-quarters of the rest of the university, in any case, and that you were meant to say the truth and meant to be honest.

I remember one person, for instance, who'd been to China—this was after the communist takeover of course—and he put forth a sort of moral problem about someone who was trying to escape from the authorities, and was he right or was he wrong to have smuggled this person across the frontier despite the danger



to the man's family? You can't really say this was a philosophical discussion. I suppose it has got vague philosophical implications, but it was basically a kind of ethical or moral problem, and those were discussed far more often than anything else. Politics in general was very rarely discussed, except in the sense of its ethical, moral dimensions.

SMITH: There's the phrase "emotional integrity" in your short article on Benedict Nicolson. Was that peculiar to him or was that shared by—

HASKELL: No, I was very, very conscious when I wrote that. Ben was at Oxford, and this Apostle group was a purely Cambridge thing, but Ben would have been an absolutely natural Apostle, in a way. He was more like an Apostle than any Apostle was, in the sense that he was very high-minded and he believed tremendously in the truth. You see, Ben, in a way, had been very closely associated with this whole Bloomsbury group—Keynes and so on—and he had a tremendous admiration for them. He adored Virginia Woolf, and he was an absolute natural Apostle. In that article I think I mentioned Philip Toynbee also. I don't know if you ever read it, but there's a marvelous book by Philip Toynbee called *Friends Apart*, which describes this time at Oxford; it's a very fascinating book. Philip was a much, much wilder character, and towards the end very, very drunk and very irresponsible, but in other ways he did have a passionate belief in wanting to get at the truth and he loved an argument. If you ever met Philip and



sat with him at a restaurant or pub or anywhere, he would immediately start asking you what you thought of something or other, and you would immediately have to answer. He loved conversation and ideas and so on, which was certainly important to the Apostles. Both he and Ben would have been natural Apostles, except they were at Oxford and therefore couldn't be.

SMITH: And the idea of saying what's on your mind regardless of how people would react, was that an ethos that permeated your generation?

HASKELL: Yes, I think it really did, and it's something that I've rather lost now, but I think that certainly was the case, yes.

SMITH: So things that could be interpreted as being cruel were neither intended as cruel nor necessarily taken as cruel?

HASKELL: That is true. But there were some quite cruel things said and there were sort of cruel games—all sorts of things. Again, coming back to what we were talking about earlier, for better or for worse—possibly worse—it's only possible in what you might call a very homogeneous society that does know certain values. I think that kind of thing does to some extent depend on a sort of one-class society, because we could say among ourselves things that I think would have been deeply upsetting to someone who came from a different sort of social background. It depended on having not necessarily values in common, but certain assumptions in common, which we did have at the time, and I think that





is a thing that has changed. And it also, to some extent, depended on a male society. Now there are women in the Apostles, quite rightly, but then it would have been unthinkable.

SMITH: There were women intellectuals at the time. If a woman intellectual happened to cross the path of this group, did people feel constrained in what they could say?

HASKELL: Well, you see, no women intellectuals belonged to the Apostles.

SMITH: Yes, but I'm talking about the King's College milieu.

HASKELL: It wouldn't have been necessarily about what you might call intellectual matters, but I think in those days it was very, very unlikely that we'd use swear words or obscenities—which we used to some extent among ourselves—in the presence of women.

SMITH: So you would have felt in some way repressed?

HASKELL: At that stage, my generation would have felt it absolutely unthinkable that a woman could be in the Apostles because one would think it impossible to say one's mind completely openly in front of women. Forster would have hated it, in any case, but leaving that aside, I think it would have been almost unthinkable, really.

SMITH: Did that mean, then, moving outside of the specifics of the Cambridge situation into the general intellectual environment, that it would be more difficult



to express one's ideas to a more mixed group?

HASKELL: Yes, I'm sure of it. I'm absolutely sure that this did have a very limiting effect. In one way it had a sort of enlightening effect because it was very nice to be able to talk to people in this way, but in another way it certainly was limited. I'm deeply, deeply aware of that.

SMITH: One of the things that the German émigrés have talked about, to a person, is the degree to which they felt excluded from British life. To a certain degree I think it was a self-voluntary isolation, but there was also a sense that they could not join, even if they wanted to. I'm wondering to what degree we're talking about this kind of ramification in the way the Oxbridge system had worked—creating these very close and emotional and intellectual bonds which did not allow other people to come into the dialogue.

HASKELL: I think there is something there. That would certainly be a case against that system. I think what you are saying is probably to some extent true. The German intellectual emigration didn't affect us of course because it was an older generation, so there wouldn't have been any question of them belonging to my group of friends, not because they were German intellectuals but because they were older; therefore it's very difficult for me to know what it was like among their own contemporaries when they came here. At the teaching level in art history of course there were many Germans. The Courtauld had Johannes Wilde,

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and German intellectuals were accepted everywhere as far as teaching was concerned. But I think socially it may well be true that they were set apart, and I think it's deeply regrettable.

SMITH: I just wonder, say, in London, what might be considered the areas where you would have serious conversation that would not include women and might not include the Germans—unless you wanted to discuss the questions that the Germans were ruminating over.

HASKELL: The thing about the Germans is that it really *is* there I think a question of age. In my case the kind of serious conversations we did have were nearly all with people of my generation, except I mentioned this don, Noel Annan, who, it is true, was ten years older than we were, but at that stage he was a bachelor, and this is quite important, really, because only bachelors would be able to spend a lot of time with us and sort of live at the college. For obvious reasons, if a man marries and has children, he's not going to spend his whole time with undergraduates ten years younger than himself sitting around in the evening talking about moral problems.

SMITH: So somebody like Forster would feel that you had betrayed an ideal?

HASKELL: Yes, very much so.

SMITH: Aside from his attitudes towards women.

HASKELL: That's absolutely true. But leaving that aside, about the German





thing, I couldn't have had a serious conversation with a German because a German would have been ten or fifteen years older and one didn't have conversations that mattered with people who were ten or fifteen years older. One learned from them, one asked them things and so on, which I certainly did with lots of German art historians, but the idea of somehow sitting around with Gombrich in the evening discussing ethics would have been unimaginable. Not because he was Gombrich or because he was German, but because he was older.

SMITH: Did you go and have dinner at their homes?

HASKELL: Oh yes, with Pevsner a lot, and Gombrich also, yes. I haven't recently visited Gombrich; he's very old now and I'm not in London. But when I was in London more, yes.



SESSION THREE: 23 APRIL, 1994

[Tape V, Side One]

SMITH: I thought today we would move on to your coming to Oxford. I was wondering whether you were called to Oxford, or whether you applied for the job?

HASKELL: Well, I suppose a mixture of both, really. I was strongly recommended to apply by someone I knew in Oxford, who in fact was on the electoral committee. He suggested I put in for the job, and I'm pretty sure there was no interview or anything else. I suppose other people must have applied, but I was never told about them. I was suddenly telephoned and told that I had got the job, and they very sensibly made the appointment well in advance, I think eighteen months in advance, or something like that, which gave me time to prepare and think about things. This was very, very soon after I got married. I accepted the job for all sorts of reasons, but one of them that made it particularly convenient was that as my whole life was changing pretty dramatically, because I was getting married, it made sense, with my wife coming from abroad, that we should both go to face a new place together, if you see what I mean. So all that worked out extremely well, and I obviously didn't hesitate in taking the job.

SMITH: What were the differences between the Cambridge and the Oxford art history programs at that time?



HASKELL: Absolutely enormous in the sense that Cambridge had a department and no professor and Oxford had a professor and no department. That sums it up very quickly. What I mean by that is that at Cambridge I was involved with teaching art history and I had several colleagues—not many but several—and by this time you could actually take art history as part of your final exams. But in Oxford, certainly when I came, and indeed it still remains the case, to a large extent, there was an art history professor who was required to give a specific number of lectures a year and take on research students, but there was virtually no other form of art history available and certainly no exams. The students couldn't graduate in art history at all in Oxford, so in that way it was a very big difference.

SMITH: In terms of the way the department has developed, have you brought in or developed a staff?

HASKELL: I came with great hopes that the whole thing would be enormously expanded. Indeed, very, very quickly after I came I did expand things to some extent; it became more and more possible to include an art-historical paper in the final exams of undergraduates in history. This had already started with architectural history under my colleague, Howard Colvin, who has now retired. I introduced a course on French nineteenth-century painting, which at the time I was very interested in, and another course on early Flemish art with a man who





was here at that time, a very distinguished Belgian medievalist, Bob [L. M. J.] Delaissé. We started it together, and almost overnight the amount of art history available in Oxford tripled. Then there was a most unfortunate occurrence. Delaissé died, and the university, which had already been somewhat reluctant about the whole notion, refused to replace him with an art historian. He was a fellow of All Souls, which meant that he had been appointed sort of *ad hominem* by virtue of his own distinction rather than because of his subject, so when it was a question of replacing him, he could have been replaced by an atomic scientist, or whatever it might be—anyone of equal brilliance. I can't remember who did replace him. No doubt it was someone of equal brilliance, but it wasn't an art historian.

So that wiped that out. Then of course the university did what they loved doing, saying, "Well, you see what happens. If you only have one person running a course, and that person is killed or dies, as in this case, it's too risky; you can't just rely on one person." Which is of course one argument, but then the answer to that argument could well be, "Why not appoint two people?" Well, at that stage what now in retrospect looks like the tiniest little cloud ever seen came across the sky of economic problems—nothing compared to what's happened since—and the first thing that always goes in England when there's an economic problem is the arts. So they said, "No, we can't possibly make another



appointment." I went to hundreds of meetings and so on trying to do something about this, and all those ambitions really rather fell by the wayside.

Nonetheless, we do have something called the postgraduate diploma, and I've had lots of research students. There's much more teaching in art history than there was when I came, but nothing like the amount that there ought to be. Now that I'm about to go and the whole thing's starting up again, I'll be very intrigued to see if my successor does get more appointments. There have been reports saying there should be more art history, but whether it'll come off is something I won't know for the moment. In a few years time I suppose we will know.

SMITH: Now you have the building on Beaumont Street. Was that there when you came?

HASKELL: Yes. That building was assigned to the art history department. We made radical changes inside the structure, but yes, the building was there, and of course it's an ideal building in the sense that it's next to the Ashmolean [Museum]. It couldn't possibly be better placed.

SMITH: What is your relationship to the Ashmolean?

HASKELL: Well, it's formally close in the sense that I am one of the trustees of the museum, and I go to lots and lots of meetings. Informally, it's extremely close because I know all the people there. Art history teaching in Oxford



virtually wouldn't exist if I couldn't ask people in the Ashmolean to teach on a kind of voluntary basis, which they have very kindly done. The art history community, such as it is, is centered on the Ashmolean, so my relationship with them is extremely close.

SMITH: So that is where, in effect, your equivalent of the American assistant and associate professors would be found?

HASKELL: Yes, I suppose so. I find it as difficult to understand the American system as you do to understand the English, but that makes more or less sense, yes. But the thing about it is they are under no obligation to teach. At any given moment any of them could say, and it would be very, very reasonable and justified, "Look, my work is just too pressing. I've simply got to abandon something, and as the museum job is what I'm paid for, I can't go on teaching." If that did happen, the whole thing would collapse.

There has been quite a lot of talk, and I've been to lots of meetings about this, that we should follow the American system, as it is at Harvard, where the members of the Fogg Museum also teach. That has been talked about a lot, but the trouble is, the museum is so understaffed, and they have to work so hard as it is, I don't think it's feasible at the moment, and what has been happening since I've been here has really been a gentleman's agreement; a purely private arrangement in which people have agreed to do this. We're on very good terms,





and I work a lot for the museum, in a different way and so on, but it doesn't by any means follow that this will necessarily continue; it could stop overnight, really. I've often dreaded it. If one of my colleagues there got a serious illness and was out of action for three or four weeks, it would cause absolute chaos at our end.

SMITH: Have you organized exhibitions at the Ashmolean?

HASKELL: Not directly, no. I've been involved with them a bit, but not very directly.

SMITH: So research and the museum are really two very separate tracks?

HASKELL: Yes, except as I say, people in the museum do help in the teaching. I ask my colleagues in the museum to give a tour of the works of art relating to any given course I do. When I say "organize exhibitions," that's not quite true; I mean, there are temporary exhibition galleries, and sometimes I have asked them to display works that pertain to my lecture and that sort of thing, and that has always been done.

SMITH: But not public exhibitions per se.

HASKELL: Well, it would be very difficult for all sorts of reasons to do that in the Ashmolean. Partly it's just a question of lack of space, and also the expense and getting insurance and everything else; they're also working under great pressures. But any way that we can help each other we do. I emphasize that



relations are just about as cordial as they can possibly be, and the director of the Ashmolean frequently consults me about things and I frequently consult him about things affecting our respective departments.

SMITH: Having come to Oxford from Cambridge, where you had been for twenty years of your life, did you find Oxford to be a very different kind of city and a different kind of intellectual community?

HASKELL: Well, in some ways. Quite a lot of people do inevitably ask this kind of question. You see for me, really, there were two important differences in my life. One, I married and therefore lived a completely different kind of life. I was no longer in college doing all things I've been describing to you. I've been in this house ever since we've been in Oxford and it is very, very central, but nonetheless, we live here and I eat with my wife and that sort of thing. So in that way it was very different. Also, being a professor is extremely difficult. I now think back with a certain incredulity to the time before I came to Oxford, when I'd scarcely ever been to a meeting, and now I seem to spend almost all my time at meetings. So all sorts of time I used to spend reading or talking to people or gossiping with people is now spent talking to them across a table saying, "Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, there's just one more question I'd like to raise." That's the level of most of my intellectual discussions, if I can put it that way—a slightly cynical view. So in those ways life did change very, very radically.



In terms of intellectual life I suppose it was different. It is notoriously the case that Oxford, not in terms of mileage but in terms of spiritual links, is much, much closer to London than Cambridge is. From Oxford I go very frequently to London, and I know far more people in London now and go out to dinners and parties or whatever it might be far more in London than I do in Oxford. And secondly of course, coming here as a professor, although I was relatively young, did mean the kind of people I met outside of the students tended to be my age or older than myself rather than younger people like those I had known at Cambridge. I did meet a lot of people, a good many of whom have now died. Maurice [C. M.] Bowra was the man who did in fact invite me to put in for the job. I see a lot of Isaiah Berlin, who is fortunately very alive and very well and is coming to dinner with us in the next couple of days, but these are people older than myself, so that had the effect of immediately advancing my age, if you see what I mean.

SMITH: Of course you were rather quickly involved with the editing of the book in honor of Jean Seznec.

HASKELL: Jean Seznec wasn't an art historian by training or anything else, but he was a sort of *homo naturaliter Warburgensis*; that was his way. He wrote this book *La survivance des dieux antiques*, and he was living in Oxford. He'd been colossally boycotted, if I can put it that way, by the French artistic establishment,





which always thinks that anyone who ever goes abroad is somehow a traitor. I was only one of three editors, and I was put on it to handle the art-historical side. The other two editors, Robert Shackleton and Anthony Levi, were literary historians. I wrote to just about every art historian in France asking for a tribute and they sort of shied away as if one had asked them to write for a festschrift for Stalin or something of that kind. [laughter] Just the idea of being involved would be degrading.

But there were two who did accept; one was a young man called Pierre Georgel, who had been in Oxford and who was a great personal friend. He liked Seznec very much, and he was a much more independent spirit. Then the other person was Jean Adhémar, who was the director of the prints at the Bibliothèque Nationale. He was delightful, engaging, and generous, but also a sort of wild character. We had an absolute nightmare with his contribution. It was very, very nice of him to produce it, but we just simply couldn't publish it as it was; it was so full of mistakes. Other than these two contributors, the French art-historical establishment just wouldn't have anything to do with the book. They all wrote back with sort of convincing excuses, I suppose the kind of excuses I find myself writing back now when I'm asked to contribute, but with me it's not because of ideological disagreements; I just never have time to do anything extra. So I understand them now probably more than I did at the time, and I forgive



them more.

SMITH: And they had nothing compelling them to do it, since Seznec was abroad.

HASKELL: I think that really was very much the case. The French do disapprove of Frenchmen going abroad.

SMITH: Now correct me if I'm mistaken, but I think both Otto Kurz and Ernst Kitzinger were here in Oxford?

HASKELL: Ernst Kitzinger is here now and lives around the corner; we see him quite a lot. I suppose he's been here seven or eight years. Otto Kurz was in London, at the Warburg. I would like to say that Otto Kurz was my first mark on Oxford, if I can put it that way. As part of my job, I was on this committee, and I still am, for choosing the Slade Professor, which is a visiting professorship. I was full of Warburgian fervor, which I still am, and when I came—it was almost the very first meeting of this committee and we had to choose about two years ahead—I suggested that Otto Kurz should be invited. Luckily this went through. He didn't lecture very often. I don't know if you ever saw him, but he was a curious, shy, sort of nervous, completely encyclopedic man. He really did know absolutely everything about anything, and at the same time he was terribly modest. You would ask him a question and he'd say, "I don't think I know anything about that," and about ten minutes later he'd tell you more than you



could find in any book. He was a wonderful man, and a very, very witty lecturer.

When we asked him to give the Slade lectures, he wrote back and said he was deeply honored and everything else, but he didn't think he could possibly do it because he didn't think he knew enough. So I then went out on a kind of private mission to try and persuade him, and I succeeded. He did give absolutely wonderful lectures. They weren't well attended, but they were among the best lectures I've ever heard in my life and I don't regret a minute of having persuaded him. It's one of the things I'm most proud of having done.

His wife was terribly ill, she was paralyzed, and once or twice she came down and he had to look after her and she was in a wheel chair, so that effectively took up most of his time. Bits of his lectures were published in one place or another, but unfortunately the whole thing wasn't published, which is a pity.

SMITH: Have you had primary responsibility for selecting the Slade Professor, would you say?

HASKELL: Well, this is a thing you'd better keep quiet, otherwise it will cause enormous offense to other people, but to some extent I would have to say yes, if I'm being honest. The reason for this has nothing to do with my particular talents or qualifications or anything else. As I mentioned, to all intents and

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purposes there was no art history at Oxford, which meant that the committee consisted of one or two people from All Souls College, the vice chancellor, one or two historians, and myself. Now, partly through my doing, the director of the Ashmolean is on the committee as well, but that's a fairly new development. I was almost the only person who'd ever heard of any art historians, if you see what I mean. The standard thing at every meeting would be for someone to begin by saying, "Well. Let's ask Kenneth Clark." Kenneth Clark had already given lectures, and he was a marvelous, wonderful lecturer, I deeply admired him and all the rest of it, but *every* meeting began with someone saying, "Let's ask Kenneth Clark." [laughter] Then after someone said, "You know, he has already given lectures and he's terribly busy," then we would get on to other people. So, yes, I suppose I did play quite a significant part in that way.

SMITH: This is a comparative question, at least in terms of what's driving it. In the United States, one of the questions is how to make art history more of an interdisciplinary effort, and it would seem at least from the outside that in Oxford that's probably a little bit more built into the structure.

HASKELL: Well, yes, it's true in a way. Not unfortunately, perhaps, as a result of deep thinking about what ought to be done, but because of the very lack of art history at Oxford. I mean, there was so little. There wasn't a department, and therefore there were very, very few students who were coming



to art history lectures as part of their exams. In a way you were forced to lecture about art in relation to history or literature or whatever it might be, and this suited me very much down to the ground. I've no doubt that one of the reasons I was invited for the job was that I wasn't a "proper art historian," as my colleagues ironically remarked. So it was interdisciplinary *force majeure*, really, rather than some very high-minded thinker getting up and saying, "This is the way to improve or change art history."

In a way it had to be interdisciplinary, because let's assume that I'd been able to give eight lectures a term on the early development of Perugino in Umbrian art. This is a perfectly reputable subject for an art history department, and at the Courtauld it would no doubt be admirable, but if I had suggested doing it in Oxford, literally no one would have come at all; there would have been no possibility, because the training would have been no use for the students' exams in terms of background or anything else. But if I gave lectures on something like the impact of the French Revolution on art or something, the historians who were studying the French Revolution would come along and see portraits of Robespierre, or whatever it might be, and think of it as part of their interest. So interdisciplinarity was forced upon us by the very nature of the lack of serious art history in Oxford, but, as I say, this did suit me down to the ground because it is my natural way of working.



SMITH: That implies that that's fine for history students who want to look at visual evidence, but what does it do for people whose interest is more art history but who want to place it in a larger social context?

HASKELL: I'd like to think that did happen, to some extent. For instance, at one stage I gave a joint course with the Ashmolean Museum on works of art in Oxford, in which I would start lecturing with slides, showing what you might call the social context and discussing that, and then people would go upstairs, or wherever it might be, with the keeper of Western art in the Ashmolean, and look at the painting itself or the sculpture itself, and the keeper would then talk about it from the viewpoint of connoisseurship, or whichever way he wanted to do it. So this was a joint endeavor in this way, and we did this for about three or four years. I suppose that to some extent answers your question.

I gave a series of lectures once on Tiepolo, and just because of my own interest I inevitably did discuss Tiepolo and his relationship to the social background, the reasons why I thought that he painted the sorts of things he did, and the pressures on him. Then of course after *Patrons and Painters*, which was written before I came to Oxford, virtually every book of mine has gone out in the form of lectures. From my point of view both the beauty and the risk of this job was the fact that there wasn't a specific exam course which required, for instance, that every year I'd have to lecture on "The Early Development of





Perugino." Rather, I could just announce that I was going to give a course of lectures on so-and-so. So I gave a course of lectures on my last book, *History and its Images*, and I gave lectures on that book I did with Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, and I also gave lectures on *Rediscoveries in Art*, which were the Wrightsman Lectures in New York, but I had given them also in Oxford. I gave very useful kind of dress-rehearsal lectures before I went to America, and then I completely recast them and rewrote them and everything else, so in that way all these things were very, very convenient for me and suited me very much.

SMITH: So in normal practice your lectures do orient themselves around your current research project?

HASKELL: Yes, I think that's absolutely true. My last lectures in Oxford will be in the next academic year, and I haven't really got around to thinking about this much, but I almost certainly will give some of the same lectures I'm going to give in London, these Paul Mellon Lectures about the dispersal of Charles I's collection and that sort of thing. So, yes, that's almost inevitable. I think it would be very difficult indeed to write lectures that are completely different from your research topic; it would be a really difficult problem for anyone.

SMITH: Yes, perhaps it's an American problem.

HASKELL: Well, from what I hear from American colleagues, I think this can be a very serious problem, yes.



SMITH: How have your lectures been attended? Has there been a pattern in terms of growth from the beginning?

HASKELL: It's obviously difficult to work this out very precisely. There are two things that have happened. One can't dissociate this question entirely from what has happened to lecture-going in general, and I think everyone you talk to here would agree that attendance at lectures has dropped very much in the last twenty years, not just in Oxford but I think in other universities as well. You see, lecture attendance isn't obligatory, and I think the undergraduates no longer look upon it as the central way in which they want to get instruction. The other sort of wild paradox about this is that there are dozens and dozens of Oxford societies here, groups of students who get together, and among them is an art society, and you'll find that if you give a lecture to an art society at a rather inconvenient time in the evening, the chances are that you'll get far more people than if you give an identical lecture as part of a course during the day. It's very, very mysterious the way things work. But I think that as an actual part of the structure of teaching, lecture-going, with the exception of one or two extraordinary people here in Oxford who are very much in vogue, has gone down. But on the whole, even for some of the really very distinguished people here who are themselves good lecturers, the numbers have gone down over the last twenty years. This has certainly happened to me, I'm not denying this for a



second.

SMITH: Since you arrived here, essentially?

HASKELL: Yes. I suppose that is the case, really. When this is all talked about and agonized over on history board committees and everything else, everyone sort of puts it down to that now fatal date, 1968. Whether that is true or not, I don't know, but it's one of those convenient dates, like 1914 or 1789, that you can pull up and say important things happened then. As I arrived in 1967, it was about the same time, yes.

SMITH: How do your lecture courses relate to the history exams?

HASKELL: Well, in a very, very precise way. I myself now find seminars enormously more valuable than lecturing. They're far, far more tiring for me of course, because if you've got a lecture prepared and know it in advance, you go there and an hour later you're free. But seminars tend to go on much longer, and of course the whole point is that the student can say anything and can ask any question, so you have to be on the alert the whole time, but, nonetheless, I think it's infinitely more valuable than lectures. So I do give courses of seminars which are directly related to exams, and I also give a series of lectures which are directly related to another exam—I've now given the last of them because I retire next year. Those lectures are intended to attract small audiences; they are meant for people doing specific exams, and if too many people come, which





occasionally has happened, I then repeat them deliberately so as not to have too many people at once. Tomorrow I can show you the room where we give lectures in our department.

SMITH: Oh, at the Beaumont Street building?

HASKELL: Yes. There is a small lecture room down there, which can't really hold more than about twenty or twenty-five people, and on the rare occasions when there are more than that, I then divide them up and then give the lecture again, just because I think it's so much more worthwhile as a way of communicating. But in addition to that I am obliged, as part of my contract here, to give open lectures to the university, and all these other things that I've been talking about, relating to my books and so on. All those have been open lectures, and everyone will agree that they do attract far more of that group one tends to think of as the old ladies of North Oxford, as it were, rather than the undergraduates. I think in theory they're not open to the public, but no one in their right senses would dream of driving out anyone who comes to their lectures; they're just grateful for anyone. This happens to the Slade lecturers; they all find there's a far wider audience from the town than from the university for the general lectures.

SMITH: Can one now take their first exam in art history?

HASKELL: Not in Oxford, no. In terms of organization and so on, nothing



very dramatic has changed. Whether it will change under my successor, I don't know. I think that will depend, as with almost anything in the university now, on money, really. Obviously, as I'm reaching the end of my time here, I spend a lot of time wondering whether I could and should have done more, and I suppose I could have done more, but the literal price would have been to do no scholarly work at all, frankly. It would have meant going to committee after committee, to rich benefactor after rich benefactor, and it really would have taken up, to all intents and purposes, all my time, for a relatively small result. I think I might have got one extra person appointed.

Up until about three years ago, when the depression started in England, I used to write dozens of letters to people for help with the library and we got quite respectable sums of money, which did help enormously, but that is different from getting something like a million pounds for the actual creation of a permanent post. That would have meant, effectively, that I would never have had the time to write a book or anything. I'm sure that would have been the case. Quite apart from that, I'm extremely bad at fundraising. Some people obviously are very good at it and do quite enjoy it, but I hate it. I'm deeply embarrassed by it. If I know a rich person well, it seems to me absolute misery to ask them for money because when you're giving them dinner, it looks as if all you're trying to do is get money out of them. And if I don't know them I don't even know how I



would begin to approach them. I just find it very, very difficult. We're constantly talking about this and the example of the American alumni. But people do do things differently.

SMITH: Well, it's a different culture.

HASKELL: Exactly, and one is very aware of that.

SMITH: The American alumni assume that they have a responsibility as well.

HASKELL: Yes, but this isn't the case here. Whether it's good or bad, I don't know, but it isn't the case here.

SMITH: What about individual students who read with you. What have the numbers and the trends been in that?

HASKELL: Now the numbers are going down primarily because I'm having to wind them down; it would be irresponsible to take on a research student when I know a year from now I will no longer be here. Particularly, of course, if it's a research student, because there are so few other people who can teach—not because of ability but because of the lack of staff. Also, I suppose research students tend to come to me or want to come to me because they're interested in the kind of work that I do. Yesterday I may have sounded melodramatic, but I do get the feeling that not very many other people are doing the kind of thing I'm doing, so when someone comes along and says, "I'm particularly interested in some aspect of collecting in seventeenth-century France," or something, I find it





very difficult to say, "Well, I'm going soon but you could easily go on to my good friend and colleague so-and-so," because I just can't think of anyone.

Yesterday morning a German student came to see me because he wanted to work with me. He wanted to work on a nineteenth-century German art historian, and he only wants to be in Oxford one year, so I can take him on, but if he'd come a little later I really couldn't have said to him, "Look, I'm terribly sorry, I can't do it now because I'm about to retire, but there is so-and-so, who is deeply interested," because, really, I genuinely can't think of anyone who *is* interested in [Gustav Friedrich] Waagen, this nineteenth-century German art historian who came to England. I just can't think of anyone in England who does know about him. No research student would come to me wanting to do the early career of Perugino or something, which, again, is an absolutely reasonable thing to study, but I would just have to say, "I'm afraid here you can't do that, but there are several people who you can see about that."

SMITH: So, theoretically, no one would come to you for a traditional art-historical subject; they would go to the Courtauld?

HASKELL: I would always advise them to, yes. The only exceptions to that are people who do have traditional art-historical subjects to whom I say, "Well, I'm terribly sorry, I can't teach you, but there is someone in the Ashmolean and if they would agree to teach you, that's fine." Our department's happy to take them



on if the curator of drawings, or whatever it might be, at the Ashmolean has the time and agrees to take them on. This we have done before. We had a man who wanted to do the silver tracing on eighteenth-century watch mounts or something, and he has subsequently had a very distinguished career at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This was the first decorative arts person that there had ever, ever been in Oxford, and of course it's not a thing I know literally the first syllable about, but there was someone at the Ashmolean who worked on the silver collection there, and I asked him if he would agree to take this person. He was delighted because, you know, all people in the decorative arts feel that they're persecuted and no one wants to study the decorative arts. So this chap got a degree, and he's now got an excellent job in the V & A, so it's a very, very happy ending. That's the kind of thing that would happen in those circumstances.

SMITH: How do you structure your research relationships?

HASKELL: With my own research students?

SMITH: Right.

HASKELL: Well, again, that varies enormously from person to person. I don't think I'm alone when I say that American students want to be looked after much, much more than European or English students, which is fine; I think it's something in the culture. They do tremendously feel they're neglected if they're not being seen a great deal. On the whole, I see English and European students



about once a month. They tell me what they want to study, I say, "Fine, write a preliminary survey of what you have in mind, then bring it to me and we'll talk about it." Then they hand it to me and we spend a couple of hours talking about it. Then I say, "Let's fix a meeting in six weeks or something and we'll talk about it again." It builds up like that on the whole, really.

I think with American researchers they do want to come around much more often and ask for advice, which is fine; that's why I'm there, to give them advice, but I think they feel that the Oxford system, if not the English system, is unduly unstructured, if I can put it that way. So it does vary very much indeed. One pupil of mine [Jon Whiteley], who's now my closest friend in Oxford, works at the Ashmolean Museum. He was the very first pupil I ever had, and he is a very talented man indeed. He was extremely self-confident, and he almost never came to see me about his work. I would have to say, "Jon, I really must see you once every two or three months." But he wrote a marvelous thesis; he just liked working that way.

[Tape V, Side Two]

SMITH: How do you handle it when research students come to you with formalist-type questions or formal analytic-type questions?

HASKELL: They tend not to, in a way, because the very fact that Oxford is not a center of art history does mean that students who do choose to come here are





people who have made a conscious decision not to go to the Courtauld. I have had very, very few students who don't know something about my work and the way that I would be able to help them or not. If they don't know my work, then during the interview I explain it to them and tell them I can only do certain things. It's exactly the same, for instance, with contemporary art, or twentieth-century art; it is a topic of great interest to students now, and quite a number do apply to come here—probably more from America than elsewhere—and then I just have to say, "I'm terribly sorry but I can't teach you that because I don't know enough about it." Apart from that Oxford is a dismal place to study contemporary art because there isn't any contemporary art here.

SMITH: But one could argue that the patronage questions in twentieth-century art are quite interesting and that your general methodological approach might be useful.

HASKELL: Yes, this is probably true, and quite frequently, people who are working on twentieth-century art who are interested in my methodological approach come to see me, and there I've always done whatever I could, but I haven't taken them on as my own students. They're usually from elsewhere, they come to talk to me and I say everything I can and give them all the advice I can, but I regard it as sort of irresponsible on my part to do that because I just don't know enough about the subject, apart from the fact that writing about patronage



in the twentieth century is an extremely difficult problem because no art dealer is going to tell you the truth about the way they operate. The last thing they're going to tell you is the truth. You can find out much more about how a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century cardinal related to his artists than you can find out about a Madison Avenue dealer or a Bond Street dealer today.

SMITH: But, nonetheless, in *History and its Images*, the last chapter does get to early twentieth-century art.

HASKELL: Yes, that's perfectly true, one particular aspect of it, and as far as I'm concerned, I would regard myself as not wholly unqualified up to about 1914, but not after. The book more or less ends at 1914.

SMITH: This is a rather open-ended question and it could go in many directions, but I'm interested in the changing ideas that students have had about art and art history as they've come to you over the last twenty-five years. Have you noticed trends?

HASKELL: I keep on feeling you'll think I'm being terribly evasive in all this, but Oxford is such a very, very difficult place to gauge this, again, because of the relative lack of art history. If I was teaching at the Courtauld now I'm sure I could give you, if not an intelligent, at least quite an extended discussion of this. I have noticed that long before the collapse of the Russian empire and everything else, Marxism was completely on its way out. Tim Clark's books appeared after



1968 [*The Absolute Bourgeois* and *Image of the People*]. The students were enormously enthusiastic about them then, it's perfectly true, but for the last seven or eight years, in classes on French nineteenth-century art, when I ask, "Well, what do you think about T. J. Clark's view of Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*," or something of that kind, the answer is, they think nothing of it. They've read the book [*Image of the People*], because it's a sort of set book, more or less, but they think it's all totally, totally uninteresting and wrong. So that has been a real change. I don't agree with Clark in a lot of ways, but I think he's very bright and I like him personally. But again, if you want to know whether things like feminism and so on have affected art history, I think you would find out much more by asking someone at the Courtauld, just because there are so few courses here.

SMITH: But, in a sense, one of the things that's happened has been a move away from stylistic analysis, and Oxford might be one of the places to look for the varieties of that move, because you simply never did stylistic analysis.

HASKELL: No, exactly, but just because of that I can't tell to what extent there's been a move away from it, if you see what I mean. What you're saying is absolutely right, and of course when I was last in New York, the older art historians I met were in a sort of frenzy about this catastrophic move away from the object, but I can't really comment on that much. I can only comment on it





insofar as I've read the articles in the journals. There is this group called the Association of British Art Historians, which is the equivalent of the College Art Association in America. It has a journal of its own, and you could monitor the changes in theories there, with every article having to quote Foucault or Derrida and so on. But I can't really talk about these things in relation to my own life because they don't apply. I mean, if I'd had students who were colossally involved with stylistic changes in an artist between 1526 and 1529 and then I suddenly found that all they were interested in was how that corresponded to the hegemony of something or other that was current, then I could say something useful to you. But I can't, really, because I haven't been aware of that change in my relations with Oxford. I'm very, very aware of it in articles I read in journals, and what I hear in art-historical meetings. I'm extremely aware of it in those contexts, but not in my own experience of teaching in Oxford.

SMITH: Would a feminist art historian come to you, do you think, to study—someone who wasn't doing Courtauld-type work?

HASKELL: Well, not many do, no. There was one a few years ago who did apply, rather to my surprise. She wanted to be a research student of mine, and I did tell her, in the most helpful, kind, nice way that I honestly thought that she was choosing the wrong person to teach her because I just wouldn't be able to cope with the kind of theoretical problems that she wanted to discuss. It's as if

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someone had come and asked if they could come to my Japanese classes or something. You know, Japanese is a tremendously worthwhile language to learn, but not everyone can teach it, and I think this is more or less what I had to explain to her. I'm not too desperately sorry for her because there are now so many people who would be absolutely longing to teach her; it's not as if her career was wrecked ever after.

SMITH: In terms of the system, can a student work with more than one professor? For instance, this student you just spoke of might have worked with a gender studies person as well as with you?

HASKELL: Absolutely. Oddly enough, as I grow older and near retirement, I find myself less sure of my judgment than I used to be in my younger days, despite all my experience, and I increasingly now do try and share the advising with someone else. I don't think the feminist thing would be much of an issue because I honestly don't think many of them would want to choose me, but it would be very logical for the people who want to do history and art history to want to come to me. But quite often with them, too, I suggest that they should work with a historian as well because I can't keep up to date with new research into history all the time. Or with literature.

We had a very good student, who is actually a feminist, and she's done very well. She wanted to do her thesis on illustrations of history in nineteenth-



century history books—what subjects were chosen for illustration and how and why and so on, which is a very, very interesting topic. I very happily took her on, but did suggest that she ought to work with someone from the English faculty as well, who would know more about the books and the editions. After all, it was important to know which particular editions were to be researched and which not. So she had two supervisors, me and this woman in the English faculty. She wrote a very good thesis, got her Ph.D., and now has a good job in Oxford; it was all very, very happy.

There was another woman, quite a strong theoretical feminist, who was half American and half Italian, and she had been subjected to every kind of current American and Italian trendiness. She was a very, very nice intelligent woman and she is now in Boston. She wanted to do something about the Middle East. She was very influenced by Edward Said's approach and wanted to do something about representations of the Middle East in French art, and that was fine because it's a very valid, interesting, and important topic. So, again, I did take her on, but I suggested that she also go to someone who knew much more about the Middle East. She was actually quite rich and she traveled all around the Middle East herself, so again I did this advising jointly with another professor, and now she's got a Ph.D. and she's doing very well. So, in cases of this kind I certainly would share the advising, and I believe in this very, very





strongly—much, more than I used to.

SMITH: Nineteen sixty-eight, as a year, actually has two meanings: first, is political upheaval, which more and more seems simply like a moment. How did that affect you, if at all?

HASKELL: Well, compared to Paris or Berkeley, it was absolutely trivial.

Balliol, especially, was the center. Great things were written up, rather badly translated from the French. Slogans would arrive here a couple of days later than in Paris and be scrawled over Balliol. Some of my students got involved in occupying central university buildings, but our building was never occupied. Among my students was a very nice chap who was deeply involved in agitating in some of the central university buildings, but he always told me he'd never dream of occupying our building or causing me any trouble. I liked him, we got on very well, and I had him around for drink and chat. There were some demonstrations in the center of Oxford going on, but it was absolutely trivial compared to what was happening in Paris.

SMITH: Perhaps the other, more important thing about 1968, at least within academia, was that that date has come to represent the epistemological shifts of what might be called the linguistic turn. Has that affected you in terms of students coming in with different types of questions—structuralism, or poststructuralism, etc.—than what you had to deal with as a professor?



HASKELL: Not very much as a professor, I'd say. It would be absurd to pretend that I didn't know that all this was happening. Obviously I did, and obviously some of them do discuss these theories, but I wouldn't say it has made a very radical difference to me here. I'm not saying it hasn't in general, and I'm not saying it hasn't made a difference within art history, because, as I say, if you read the journals you see it has made a very, very important difference to art-historical writing in this country and elsewhere . . . well, not quite as much in this country as in America. The very first undergraduate student I had turned out to be the leading English feminist art historian, and she has quite a reputation, even in America—Griselda Pollock.

SMITH: Oh, of course, yes.

HASKELL: She was my first undergraduate pupil, oddly enough. I see her from time to time, not very often now, not because I don't want to, but she lives in Leeds and I'm down here. I bump into her at meetings. All I remember about her at the time was that she had a sort of anti-Vietnam War badge on, but just about every student had an anti-Vietnam War badge on, and I don't think that particularly distinguished her from anyone else. She was a very nice, talented student. I think she's gone a bit crazy, but that's just my feeling; she's a perfectly nice person.

SMITH: Do you have any thoughts about the usefulness of the various post-



structural theories, from Foucault to Derrida to Lacan?

HASKELL: If I had been younger when it all happened I probably would, but it's very, very difficult to look at oneself from the outside. I honestly don't know whether this is a matter of great regret and even embarrassment, or a cause of enormous pride, but I'm not consciously aware of the fact that what I've written would be much different if these theories had or had not happened. In my last book, *History and its Images*, I just touch on the notion that you can't discover truth and you can't discover history and I related that to skepticism, which is discussed by Momigliano and others. I'm very fascinated by the notion of historical skepticism and doubt about how you prove things.

One of the books that most excited me when I read it was not an art history book at all, although it did throw some light on art history; it was a book by the French historian of ideas, [Rene] Pintard, called *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. I don't know if you know it, but I thought it was an absolutely wonderful book. It was one of the rare times when I wrote a sort of fan letter to the author out of the blue saying what an enormous impact it had made on me. One of the things the book talks about is the skeptics in the seventeenth century. In a way they were enormous reactionaries, if I can use that kind of terminology. They had enormous contempt for someone like Galileo, partly because Galileo was trying to strive at something which they thought was





an almost futile waste of time: "You *can't* find these things out, so why do you think a telescope is going to be better than anything else?"—in this sort of way. So it wasn't a very intellectually progressive movement. Anyway, the book made an enormous impact on me and it was very valid, so obviously when I wrote *History and its Images* I was aware to some extent that there were historians trained in modern theories who are taking up this notion that the past is just sort of made up for our own convenience, and it has no validity. I'm fascinated by the idea, but I don't think it's actually affected what I've written very much.

SMITH: Something like Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* would seem to be pertinent to several of the things that you've studied.

HASKELL: Yes, one or two people have told me that. You see, if it's worth understanding anything about me, and I doubt if it is, I have this enormously perverse attitude which I talked to you about yesterday, when we were talking about Leavis and George Eliot. I just refused to read George Eliot until much later. I now think she's wonderful, but I refused to read her because everyone said that I ought to read her. I read some of Foucault, but I had a deliberate antagonism toward the kind of obligatory homage to Foucault that I found in every second-rate article I came across. You know, the author would proclaim to be deeply influenced by Foucault's method and then would say some of the most banal things in the world.



Last year, I was on a sort of international committee in France for setting up a new library—it involved turning the old Bibliothèque Nationale into an art history library. Aside from the French [committee members], they appointed one Swiss, Jean Starobinski, one Italian [Enrico Castelnuovo], one Englishman, which was me, and one American, [William] Rubin, the ex-director of the Museum of Modern Art. We had a meeting, and insults were almost exchanged between a very theoretically-minded French art historian and one of the curators of the Louvre. The theoretical man said, "How can you reject the importance of someone like Foucault? It's only now we really understand the full greatness of Velázquez, since Foucault wrote about his *Las Meninas*." Well, this seemed to me so pathetic. I mean, all my life I've been brought up to appreciate Velázquez as probably the greatest painter there's ever been and so on, and everyone I know has felt this, and somehow the idea that before Foucault showed up nobody understood this . . . I'm sure it's not Foucault's fault, but it so irritates me, I'm afraid, that it may be that I'll come to Foucault like I came to George Eliot—long after the whole fuss has died down.

SMITH: And perhaps only at that time will he become useful.

HASKELL: I think that may well be the case.

SMITH: Well, shifting from the trendy, I'd like you to talk about the student research projects that you felt most excited about.



HASKELL: I suppose one of the students who did affect my way of thinking a lot was this man I mentioned yesterday, Charles Hope, who is now at the Warburg. I mentioned him I think in a rather critical spirit, and I would go on maintaining criticisms, but I did find his work very interesting. He was enormously skeptical about the whole iconographical approach. I'd been brought up on the idea that Panofsky was really the great god of all time, and I still have enormous admiration for him, but somehow this kind of unthinking acceptance of Panofsky did lead one to be too generous in one's appraisal of Panofskians, if you see what I mean. Whatever one says, Panofsky will remain as a great art historian and a man for whom I have enormous respect. I never knew him personally, but I have enormous respect and admiration for him, and so many people shared that opinion. Then this pupil of mine, Charles, who is a man of boundless self-confidence in some ways, suddenly started looking at this all over again. It wasn't that people hadn't doubted the excesses of iconology, but they had done so in a purely philistine way—either intellectually philistine, or they would say, "It may well be true that this image represents a platonic vision, but the fact does remain that what's really important is its wonderful color and it's a beautiful painting." All of which is perfectly true.

So there'd been those two reactions, and I think Charles was the first I can think of who was certainly not intellectually philistine. I think his arguments





are often coarse, not in the sense of vulgar, but not terribly subtle. Nonetheless, he was aware that the pictures were beautiful, and I think, in a way, it makes Titian an even greater painter if he can create this enormous feeling of moral seriousness without having a learned apparatus to back him up. So to my mind, far from diminishing one's admiration for great art, it actually positively increased it. So, certainly, working with Charles did make me feel that I was looking at things in a new way, and it has affected me since.

SMITH: What was the work that he did with you?

HASKELL: He worked on an edition of Titian letters. It was a purely philological thing. He was just publishing Titian documents, but he was using them, nonetheless, as an interpretation. I encouraged him and brought him along to conferences and so on. In fact, Bob Silver had asked me about reviewing art for the *New York Review of Books* and I recommended Charles Hope to him and of course he's causing absolute heart attacks among various people, in America especially, with some of his reviews. I did regard his work as very exciting, even though, as I say, I didn't accept it all. I've certainly had other students. It sounds pathetic that I can't reel off a list of names at once.

SMITH: Well, one has tons of students.

HASKELL: It's not that I haven't had good ones who I have very much liked and respected and found their work extremely interesting; it's just a fault of



memory. I'll shift through my papers and as soon as I see various names I'll immediately remember what they've done.

SMITH: Perhaps one way of talking about this is to discuss the standards that you set for evaluating whether a student project sounds like it's going to be fruitful or not.

HASKELL: In that sense Charles's obviously was. He has started a real kind of methodological debate, which hasn't yet been settled. I doubt if anyone would write quite in the same way about Renaissance art since he burst onto the scene. They might do it, but they'd do it in a self-consciously defiant way. They would say, "Despite the absurd animadversions of Charles Hope, I still maintain . . . ," or something like that. I think Charles has done that.

I am deeply fascinated and intrigued when students write theses which don't necessarily have that quality but do just enormously add to the sum of human knowledge, if you see what I mean. I've certainly had students who have made absolutely amazing discoveries in archives and everything else, which may not have necessarily changed any fundamental view in that way, but which have completely altered what we know about some artist or some collector. Obviously quite a lot of people have been interested in working with me on collectors, and I can certainly think of one or two who've made absolutely major discoveries. There's an Australian, Gerard Vaughan, who has just now left Oxford. He wrote



to me from Australia and came backed up by a very strong reference from a leading Australian art historian, who I don't think I've ever met, but I knew of him. He wanted to work in particular on English collectors of ancient art in eighteenth-century Rome. I can't remember if he'd ever been to England before that, and I wrote back, saying it was just the sort of subject I was interested in and I would be delighted to help him, but I told him I was afraid he would find this a completely barren topic because there was this great classic work of [Adolf] Michaelis's [*Ancient Marbles in Great Britain*—admittedly it's a hundred years old, but since then people have worked on it a bit and added footnotes and there have been short articles. So I said, "When you get here I think we ought to discuss it again. Perhaps you could still work in the same field but on something slightly different, because otherwise you might spend your time here just finding absolutely nothing." And he proved me absolutely crazily wrong by getting into an archive which no one much knew about and transforming our knowledge of this subject more than anyone since Michaelis wrote about it a hundred years ago. Unfortunately, he still hasn't published it because he had a job, but now he swears to me he's going to publish it. That sort of thing gives one enormous pleasure, just thinking that you know about a subject and suddenly finding an enormous amount more.

SMITH: Was that just luck that he found this archive?

THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON  
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE PRESENT TIME  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY  
OF THE BARR

VOLUME I  
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE YEAR 1700

BOSTON: PRINTED BY S. KNEELAND, AT THE SIGN OF THE ANCHOR, IN THE N. E. CORNER OF THE MARKET PLACE.  
1787



HASKELL: I can't remember who it was who said it, but there was some famous person who said that absolute blind luck is almost impossible. You have to know where to look for things, if you see what I mean. Most research, after all, is partly luck. I suppose it was luck that the archive proved so enormously rich as it did, but the idea of looking at that particular archive wasn't luck.

SMITH: It's interesting that nobody in the last hundred years had thought to go look at this archive.

HASKELL: Absolutely. It is very amazing. Then he used the material extremely well, so that was another thing I was very, very pleased with. There certainly are other students I could talk about and I will prepare myself for next time and we can come back to that question; it's just that at the moment my mind's gone blank. I would hate to think that I was implying that I haven't had very good students because I certainly have.

SMITH: No, that's fine. Perhaps tomorrow we can come back to this. What would some of the reasons why that archive lay untouched?

HASKELL: Since then of course it's become quite well known; it's now been acquired by the British Museum, in fact. It was a private family archive, and it was on loan to a local public record office, which means it was open to the public domain. It was a huge archive of which one part had attracted a great deal of attention because it was a very old family that went back to the thirteenth century

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or something. There were an enormous number of manorial rolls and medieval things, and this certainly had attracted people. I think the people who had been interested in it and had mentioned it talked about how frightfully important it was for understanding the status of the serfs in the fourteenth century, you know, or the cost of bread—those kinds of questions.

The man who built up this collection was rather the black sheep of the family. He was a Catholic, which meant he had to be educated on the Continent rather than in England and therefore he didn't look after his estates much. I think everyone who had looked at the archive really rather lost interest because it wasn't the kind of thing that people were looking for. I would also say that not many people thought it was terribly interesting to find out about a collector, particularly of this kind of art. This particular student probably came to me because of the book I did with Nick Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, where we talked about the type of art that was enormously admired then.

This man, [Charles] Townley, who was the collector in question, bought what is now dismissed as sort of bad late-Roman copies of Hellenistic works, which of course he thought were the most wonderful things ever, so I think most art historians wouldn't have cared much about what he bought. It's got a certain social interest, but it's not Raphaels or Rubenses. But of course what Gerard found in the archives was absolutely absorbing—all sorts of information on a kind



of gossip level: how you smuggle things out of Rome, and what [Johann Joachim] Winckelmann's opinions were, which sometimes can be important, because he knew the antiquarians and everything else, so there was a great deal there of real, wide, general interest—not just about the objects, but about Roman society in the eighteenth century.

SMITH: Of course that raises the question, and you mention this in your own work, that art-historical investigation is too much determined by contemporary tastes.

HASKELL: I feel this tremendously. I agree with that.

SMITH: Is there any antidote to that?

HASKELL: Any person who's ever thought about these things knows that one can't divorce one's own self from what's going on around one. But I think this would relate to what we were saying about Foucault and poststructuralism and everything else. I'm in a sort of arrogant way quite pleased with this review of my book just out today, by Lawrence Stone, which I literally read about half an hour before you came this morning. It ends in quite a hostile way, with the implication that I don't take account of theory. I suppose, in a way, like everyone else in the whole world, all I want are fantastically adulatory reviews and statements like "This is the best book of all time," but if I am going to be attacked I don't mind being attacked for not being involved too much in

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TO: DR. J. K. STILLE  
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RE: [illegible]

DATE: [illegible]

BY: [illegible]

FOR: [illegible]

BY: [illegible]



contemporary things. I don't know whether I'll be believed or not, but I would like to say that I do quite self-consciously believe in reading old history as much as new history. I think the ideas of very intelligent historians writing in the nineteenth century or the eighteenth century can be just as interesting as those of historians writing today. The fact that they sometimes knew less and so on is perfectly true, but the idea that because one doesn't take account of Foucault and Derrida one isn't interested in ideas is simply not true; I think it's just a question of choosing what ideas you're interested in. I find that [Edward] Gibbon's ideas are still genuinely interesting ideas to me. This sounds like a tremendously defensive statement.

SMITH: No, it doesn't sound defensive to me. It sounds perfectly natural. But, of course, if there has been a benefit from the demise of standards after '68, it has been that if all images are equally fallacious, then presumably one can go back to any given time period and look at those standards without having to espouse one's contemporary standards.

HASKELL: Yes. I got out of what you were asking earlier too easily. Of course I do recognize that these are very, very real issues, and they can't be laughed off. I do realize that tremendously. There is something that genuinely applies to me, and I would think it might apply to other people of my age, but I just don't know: during the course of my intellectual maturity, two systems of



thought which were enormously influential and for which one was always derided for not paying enough attention to, have been enormously diminished in status. I am thinking, obviously, of Freudianism and Marxism. One only has to read the *New York Review of Books* now to see what people say about Freud. Again, whether one agrees with this or not I don't know, but this would have been unimaginable when I was young, when I started writing. I never was a real Freudian, though you may find an odd kind of allusion here and there, but I was certainly working in a climate in which even if one didn't believe everything, nonetheless, it would affect one's environment. The same was true of Marxism. I was never a Marxist, as we've already discussed, but I don't deny for a single second that I was acutely conscious of what the Marxists were doing. I read Antal, I read all the Marxist historians of art. The fact that they've now both gone out of fashion doesn't mean that they're wrong; they may in turn be rediscovered, but, nonetheless, it has really very, very seriously affected me, and when I think of that, I am aware of the fact that someone like Foucault, and the poststructuralists may well go the same way in ten or twenty years. And that doesn't encourage me necessarily to become more theoretical in a way that my critics would want me to, because I would say that if my art history is out of date, which it may well be, it was out of date from the first, if you see what I mean. It was out of date because of its premises, not because it had accepted a

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and the role of the auditor in this regard. It also touches upon the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the paper focuses on the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including interviews, surveys, and document analysis. It highlights the importance of using a mix of methods to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

3. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study, which show that there is a significant gap between the current practices and the best practices in financial reporting. It also identifies the factors that contribute to this gap, such as lack of resources, knowledge, and motivation.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the findings for practice and policy. It suggests that there is a need for more training and support for auditors, as well as for stronger regulatory frameworks to ensure the integrity of financial reporting.

5. The fifth part of the paper concludes with a summary of the main findings and a call for further research in this area. It emphasizes the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the findings are being implemented and that the system is continuously improving.

particular theory of Freudianism or Marxism or anything else.

I don't know whether you've talked to other people of my generation, but, you know, the intellectual development of people my age is one of the least significant consequences of what's been happening in the outside world. I do know a lot of Marxists, and they remain very good friends, but I somehow do feel that I talk to them in a slightly different way, that's to say, without feeling a need to apologize at every stage, intellectually. I am very, very conscious of the fact that Marxism has much less force now. So when people do mention post-structuralism and everything else, I'd like to say, "Well, remember Freud? Remember Marx? There's another tombstone now that's still got a name to be put on it." [laughter]

[Tape VI, Side One]

SMITH: What about sociology of art?

HASKELL: Well, when I was working on this last book it wasn't so related to that, but to some extent I used to follow sociology. I've got a certain number of books on it and I used to go to lectures, insofar as the subject existed in England, which it didn't really very much. The French were more interested in it. It's certainly something I've been aware of.

SMITH: I'd like to shift to some of your books. We discussed *Patrons and Painters* somewhat yesterday, but I am interested in the process by which you





expanded the subject from the Jesuit style to a much more expansive and inclusive kind of study of baroque painting in Italy.

HASKELL: What happened, as I hinted, was that once I had worked on the Jesuit churches, I suppose I felt like a burglar who thinks that the key he's got in his hand will only get him into the pantry where he could just pinch a couple of loaves and a bottle of wine, and he suddenly tries the next lock and that door opens and he finds himself in a sitting room loaded with absolutely marvelous things. What I mean by this not very accurate analogy is that it did seem to me that if I could understand the structure of patronage as it affected the Jesuits, then I could use that key on a much, much wider scale and see how it affected all sorts of other institutions or social classes. And then, having done that, I suppose what happened next was influenced by sociology, although I'm not sure if any sociologists would believe this. I suppose Roman seventeenth-century society was one model, and I felt that I needed to test that against other situations. I wanted to know whether what I was saying was valid only for certain periods of seventeenth-century Rome or might have implications elsewhere. But I was still very interested in what might be called the baroque style, rather than the neoclassical style. I've been reproached for that by various critics and friends and I have changed my mind a bit since then.

I then wanted to go on not with Rome, where the whole situation did



radically change, but with Venice, which remained, in a way, a very static sort of society; indeed, the art remained static. Having passed through Europe and through various Italian provincial towns, I was just very, very keen to try the thing out in different ways, and then it seemed to me to make a book which had a real pattern running through it. I think it was at this moment that I felt that I did suddenly understand something about the structure of how art came to be produced in societies, and that made me feel that I really couldn't just leave it there, that I had to go further, because otherwise it would be, as I say, like having a key that opened one door and throwing it away before I tried to open the next door.

SMITH: That almost sounds like an epiphany, in a way. Was it in the form of effects, or a structure of perception, a model that one could almost call theoretical, or of a methodology that you had discovered was working? Or was it all three?

HASKELL: I suppose I'd like to say it was a bit of all three. It sounds incredibly banal, but I suppose it really was the moment when I discovered that what was in a Jesuit church wasn't necessarily Jesuit art. The minute I realized that, I felt that perhaps I should be doubtful about all these assumptions and I should test them all out. So I tested them out on an empirical basis, but I'm not denying that that did have some sort of theoretical implications, because if you



say that what you see in a Jesuit church is not necessarily Jesuit art but is the result of different pressures from different kinds of people—it can depend on political power, it can depend on money, it can depend on intrigue and influence, it can depend on the nature of a special artist, it can depend on the individual character of a particular patron—then you are in a way making a theoretical statement, even if it's a theory that's antitheory, if you see what I mean. So the answer is, yes, I do think that discovery did have theoretical implications. When people say that my work is totally empirical and contains no theory, I don't quite feel this is true, because it does seem to me that if you are attacking one theory, then that in itself does have theoretical implications.

SMITH: I'd like to pursue that a little bit more in terms of the degree to which what was motivating your work, making it productive and therefore exciting, was the negativity of, to use a trendy term, deconstructing an existing theory, or whether there was a more positive core.

HASKELL: I don't think it was the negativity. I think the satisfaction of negativity, if I can put it that way, really did come later. *Patrons and Painters* was the first of my books Gombrich reviewed, and he said one thing which I suppose I ought to have thought of myself while writing the book. I was talking about Tiepolo and I said something like, "There's no reason to think that social forces made Tiepolo paint the way he did." I can't remember exactly what it





was, and I then put forward some sort of empirical argument. I remember Gombrich pointing out in his review that I shouldn't have been so cautious about my arguments. He said, "Why doesn't Haskell accept the idea that Tiepolo came along, had his own style, painted in certain ways, and then the aristocrats said, 'This is absolutely marvelous, this is just the sort of thing we want.'" In other words, rather than thinking the aristocracy produced Tiepolo's style, here was Tiepolo, with what Gombrich now calls a "problem-solving style." Tiepolo was doing something and suddenly the Pisanis or the Rezzonicos or whatever the Venetian family might be, said, "Good God. No one's ever been able to show it to us in that way before." And so they encouraged Tiepolo and in that way it was Tiepolo who invented the style. It wasn't just the Gombrich view, but from then on I think that did play its part in making me rather suspicious of Wölfflin, of all these people who did feel that somehow or other there was some sort of innate force working.

I don't agree with everything Gombrich says always, but I do think that here he is right, that there are just some things that some artists can do better. I'm not even now talking about quality, but the ability to please patrons. I do think that a baroque artist doing a vision of a saint would have struck anyone in 1630 as being more satisfactory and more convincing even than what Raphael would have done. They'd have said that Raphael was a far greater painter, but I



think they would have seen that Rubens could actually do the people flying in the air and everything else more effectively, as it were.

So in other words, this Wölfflin idea that there is an innate force pushing forward changes in the arts, or the Marxist idea that there are these social forces doing it have both got something to them, but the only way it can work is through the negative approach of patrons suddenly discovering something they want. I think that is true. I'm sure that's why Gombrich reviewed my book favorably; it did happen to fit in very much with the kinds of arguments he was putting forward later. I'm not saying that my book gave Gombrich the idea, obviously not, but in later years he did enormously develop that problem-solving notion on far, far sounder grounds than I've done. I think then I did get what you might call, yes, satisfaction out of the negative thing, but while doing the work I think it was what I would call a positive process.

What I've always wanted in history was to have a kind of time machine, a kind of H. G. Wells time machine to go back and just be there in the Jesuit church and just see what was going on—this obsessed me. Certain historians in the nineteenth century, people like [Jules] Michelet, seem to be able to reconstruct the past wonderfully well; they can actually make you see it. I've always been rather a sucker for historical films and that sort of thing. I just terribly, terribly want to be there.



SMITH: But is it possible for you or anybody else to see that church in 1630 as the contemporaries saw it?

HASKELL: No, of course not. It is impossible to know exactly what the past, or possibly even what the present is like. Of course I agree with that, but that doesn't seem to be a reason for not wanting to do it. I've put this forward in the introduction to the French edition of *Rediscoveries in Art*, which is a book that Gombrich hated because of its implications of relativism. The book does show to some extent that lots of artists we do think are wonderful were not always thought wonderful, and this could happen again, and therefore taste isn't something that's absolutely defined. What I did then say is that it's making the effort to get there which is important, and I compared that, for better or worse, to something like morality. I know perfectly well, and most of us know, that we can't actually be good, as it were, but I think that it would be utterly wrong to conclude that because one can't be good, then one shouldn't even bother about trying to be good; and if this attitude is carried over into aesthetics it can have very dangerous or misleading results.

SMITH: When you finished *Patrons and Painters*, what were your plans at that point? Did you have another book already developing after that first one?

HASKELL: No. What happened to me was what must happen to you and to almost everyone writing books; it certainly happens to a lot of people I know





now. *Patrons and Painters* was a success in the sense that it had good reviews and one thing and another, and then almost immediately after it appeared the publishers themselves and various other people wanted me to do a kind of *Son of Patrons and Painters*. [laughter] They wanted me to continue the same theme, like in films, and I really desperately didn't want to do that. So I thought of the most remote thing that I could possibly think of, which was French nineteenth-century academic painting. Of course what was vaguely in my mind was the idea that when I'd started on Italian baroque painting almost nothing had seriously been written about it, and I thought, "Well, I must start doing the same sort of thing again." I remember giving lectures on French nineteenth-century academic painting, which was then as little studied as baroque art had been earlier.

SMITH: At Cambridge?

HASKELL: The first one I ever gave was in London, oddly enough. I was asked to give a lecture at the Slade School of Art, where I taught for a time, and I lectured on sort of unknown French nineteenth-century painters.

SMITH: And these were people like [Thomas] Couture?

HASKELL: Well, yes, Couture . . . I've got the lecture downstairs. I could sort of list them: [Adolphe-William] Bouguereau, [Alexandre] Cabanel, [Jean-Léon] Gérôme, and so on. Yes, Couture was pretty near to them. I just thought that this would be something completely different. No one could possibly then



ask me to do another *Patrons and Painters*. Also, I was aware of the fact that I had grown to love baroque art, and I thought that I might make sensational discoveries among the Coutures, or among the Bouguereaus. In fact I didn't, really. I certainly do think that some of them are very, very much better than people say they are, and it did break me once and for all of the habit—which perhaps also relates to what we've already talked about with Forster—of thinking that the impressionists were the best thing that had ever been, because every millionaire wanted to buy impressionists, because auction houses were constantly writing things like, "art achieves perfection as it reaches impressionism," if you see what I mean; it cured me of that, which certainly was a thing well worth being cured of. Nonetheless, I didn't find that it was going to be enormously rewarding. In fact, I found that it was going to be incredibly difficult—too difficult for me.

SMITH: Difficult in what way?

HASKELL: Well, the problem I set myself, or the book I wanted to write—and I told lots of people I wanted to write it—was going to be a book on why artists like [Ernest] Meissonier, Bouguereau, Gérôme got every kind of decoration, huge sums of money, and every commission immediately, whereas the impressionists and Cézanne, at the beginning of their careers, were either neglected or mocked. I thought, "This has never ever happened before." There are so many books



saying this is a sort of constant of history and so on, but in fact it never ever happened before 1800. I couldn't think of a single artist of talent before 1800 who wasn't immediately acclaimed—therefore it's a historical rather than a psychological subject. I thought it would make a very interesting book; in a way I still think it would, but I just came to the conclusion that I would have to spend the rest of my life doing it, more or less. I've always felt this way about the nineteenth century.

When I was doing *Patrons and Painters* I couldn't keep up with all the current literature on seventeenth-century art, but I could actually read all the primary sources. I spent about a year reading all the lives of the artists, everything I could find about them, and that was perfectly possible. Of course I don't deny documents could turn up and I'd miss things, but basically I knew I could handle the material. With the nineteenth century I very quickly found that I was just getting nowhere because every day everything I was reading was changing and I think I lost my nerve, really, in that way. There I think to do what you might call my kind of art history would be impossible; there you would have to be a historian of a theoretical cast of mind. You'd have to have a kind of theory about it.

I did write an article which was first given as a lecture at the Warburg called "Art and the Language of Politics," which was in a way about the





association that people made between artistic change and political change, and I do think there's something in it. But it is much, much more complicated than that, and I fairly soon realized that if I was going to do this book I'd have to spend the rest of my life doing it, and that was combined with the fact that I found that I just didn't really like the art. So to spend the rest of your life doing something that you think probably can't be done, in a field which you don't terribly like, is a rather discouraging prospect.

SMITH: In a period of academic inflation there are probably very few fields where it would actually be possible to read all the secondary literature that's produced.

HASKELL: I think that's true now. I don't think that was necessarily true when I began, but I think it is true now. I think it's very, very difficult. Every student who comes to me is anxious about this, and I think it is absolutely true that somewhere someone will be writing a thesis on almost anything. And certainly with this nineteenth-century project I quite genuinely thought that I was onto a new topic that no one else really had thought about and the idea of actually looking at Bouguereau and Gérôme closely was something very extraordinary, but I did find that quite a lot of people were beginning to do it at much the same time, so I was part of the zeitgeist, the very notion of which I reject.

SMITH: Do you have any explanations for that?

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the President has addressed the Congress since the establishment of the new government. The letter is written in a very formal and dignified style, and it contains many important points. The President begins by expressing his gratitude to the Congress for the honor of being elected to the office of President. He then goes on to discuss the state of the Union, and the progress of the government. He mentions the many difficulties that have been overcome, and the many successes that have been achieved. He also mentions the many challenges that still remain, and the need for the Congress to continue to support the President in his efforts to govern the country.

2. The second part of the document is a letter from the Vice President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it is the first time that the Vice President has addressed the Congress. The letter is written in a very formal and dignified style, and it contains many important points. The Vice President begins by expressing his gratitude to the Congress for the honor of being elected to the office of Vice President. He then goes on to discuss the state of the Union, and the progress of the government. He mentions the many difficulties that have been overcome, and the many successes that have been achieved. He also mentions the many challenges that still remain, and the need for the Congress to continue to support the Vice President in his efforts to govern the country.

HASKELL: Well, yes, and I think other people felt the same way I did. We got terribly fed up with this notion, which was being pushed at the time, that the only thing that mattered was impressionism. Feminists say now, perhaps with some reason, that women were being written out of history, so to speak. Well, in the same way, I felt that every kind of art other than impressionism was being written out of history. I did feel that people had very, very definite interests, partly intellectual, partly financial, in just promoting impressionism to the core. The time I'm talking about was the time when the impressionists really took off. Also, I think the other thing was a feeling that contemporary art had just got into a complete dead end, and the notion therefore that everything should be seen as a kind of ancestry, moving toward Jackson Pollock or [Mark] Rothko and so on, was utterly unsatisfactory.

Now if you're asking about zeitgeist, I think in that way I suppose other people must have begun feeling that. Someone like Bob [Robert] Rosenblum, in New York, would react in the same way. He's now become a good friend, but at the time I didn't know him. He's much more sympathetic to contemporary art, but he does take up certain strands of contemporary art which are dismissed, and he takes up "academic art" and so on, partly in reaction against this sort of Manichaeian view of art history that says all impressionists were good and everyone who was not an impressionist was bad.

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SMITH: But then you have [Albert] Boime.

HASKELL: Boime is a riveting case, yes. I think he's a very extraordinary character. I haven't seen him for some time, but I did get to know him quite well. In fact, I read his first books for a publisher and recommended that they be published. He does things in a very, very strange way; he puts everything completely upside down. I did use Boime as an example in my book. In the nineteenth century, some extreme political reactionaries could be in the lead of taste, as it were, and equally some extreme left-wing revolutionary figures liked only academic art. I used Boime in that way as an example of what was happening now. I think most things he does are odd, but it's exactly like what happened in the nineteenth century.

SMITH: Much of the construction of the nineteenth century seems to me to rest on rather conscious decisions that were made at the Museum of Modern Art.

HASKELL: Yes.

SMITH: Did that kind of orthodoxy take root in England?

HASKELL: No, it really didn't, and now of course it is almost a cliché. Talking about new trends and so on, it didn't terribly affect me or my pupils because they were not involved, but it's almost impossible to open an art journal now without Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art, being looked upon as a sort of Reagan before his time, as someone who was totally





responsible for the cold war. This has now become an absolute cliché, but at the time I don't think that ever occurred to me. I didn't know America well. I'd been to America by then of course quite a number of times and lectured and so on, but I don't think I ever have particularly felt at home or at my ease in American society in the way that I certainly did in Italy. It doesn't follow that I agreed with everyone in Italy, but I did feel more at ease in that way. I've got dozens of American friends and see Americans here, and I do go to America and so on, but it's not the kind of society in which I've been involved in those kinds of discussions. I must have been to the Museum of Modern Art, but it just seemed to me a good museum of modern art, if you see what I mean. The idea that it was all a plot or conspiracy against the Russians just hadn't dawned on me then. [laughter]

Herbert Read was a man I knew a little. He was a very influential English critic who at the end of his life got rather disenchanted, but he was always advocating every latest thing in modern art. I'm absolutely convinced that he just genuinely did believe that art moved forward in the way that Vasari or lots of people in the past believed that art moved forward; the next generation would build on what had happened before. I think that's the sort of climate of opinion I was brought up in.

SMITH: Yes, a scientific paradigm.



HASKELL: Exactly, exactly.

SMITH: We mentioned Meyer Schapiro yesterday, and he certainly put forward the notion that every generation produces four to five artists who become the artists that are worth studying the most because they're the ones that the next generation must base their efforts on.

HASKELL: Yes, and, you see, he's passed this on. Everyone's told me that he's an absolutely wonderful teacher, and I find him riveting to talk to and I've heard his lectures, but he certainly passes this idea on to his pupils. Someone like Henri Zerner at Harvard, who I do know quite well and who's a friend, absolutely believes this. He wrote this book with Charles Rosen [*Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art*] in which they do challenge me. I have had lots and lots of arguments with him about it, of the friendliest possible kind, but he's an absolute Meyer Schapiroite. Whatever one says to Henry about anything, he'll say, "Oh well, Meyer was saying that more than twenty years ago," or something like this. I think, in a way, and other people have pointed this out, Meyer Schapiro swept America and Gombrich swept England, and they're both very mutually antagonistic. I don't know what their personal relations are like, but they don't like each other's art history one bit. I think, almost inevitably, being in England I found myself more under the influence of Gombrich and Henri Zerner found himself more under the influence



of Meyer Schapiro.

SMITH: Though that raises a question, since Gombrich has almost institutional status in Britain. He comes to represent Art History, yet I would pick up from you a sense that you would resist that kind of hagiography.

HASKELL: Yes, I do. There are times when he drives me absolutely mad, it's perfectly true. But it doesn't alter the fact that lots of things Gombrich did have very much entered my way of thinking. Not the sorts of things probably that Gombrich himself would look upon as most important, such as his theories of perception, because they're the things that have least involved me—all that business about the duck and the rabbit. I get totally lost in all that. I'm sure it is important for theories of perception, but that is the thing about him that has mattered least to me.

When someone did ask me about why I thought Gombrich was very important for me, the only thing that I could say was that I thought he was like someone standing behind my shoulder. Every time I wrote a kind of careless easy sort of cliché sentence, such as the zeitgeist sort of thing, I felt Gombrich there reproaching me and saying, "Do you really mean that?" In a way, I can't possibly think of two people more different than Gombrich and Forster, but I suppose I do look upon them both as sort of checking facile responses. It's very odd because, as I say, Forster was a genuine liberal skeptic and Gombrich is very





dogmatic, and I don't think at all liberal. But I do feel that if I did write a very unthoughtful sentence which I knew I couldn't get away with, that he might be there stopping me from getting away with it. I think that sort of thing has meant much more to me than anything about perception.

SMITH: In 1966 you did a book on [Théodore] Géricault. I haven't seen that.

HASKELL: I can show you; it is somewhere here, but it's scarcely a book.

There were ten color plates, and about a two-thousand word introduction, and that's all. After *Patrons and Painters* appeared, I was put in *Who's Who*, this reference book, and I suppose at that stage anything I published I put into *Who's Who*, and I think it's probably remained there. I now feel it's an absolutely fatuous thing to have in there, but I feel somehow that if I removed it people would think I'm removing it for some shady and disreputable reason. Sometimes when I give lectures I'm introduced as the author of a book on Géricault, but it's an absolute nonbook; I mean, it's not worth talking two seconds about.

SMITH: But it was during this period when you were researching academic art?

HASKELL: Yes, but Géricault had nothing to do with that. He is an artist I absolutely adore, so I'm not ashamed; I don't think it was particularly bad or anything, it's just not worth talking about.

SMITH: Then the following year is *The Age of the Grand Tour*.

HASKELL: Yes, an equal absurdity. That was a publisher who was rather a



rogue, but quite amiable, called Paul Elek. He was, I think, originally Czech and he came to England as a refugee. He did quite well during the boom era of publishers, getting his printing done in Hong Kong and that kind of thing, and he wanted to publish a book on the age of the grand tour. He asked Francis Watson, who was at that stage director of the Wallace Collection and a great authority on eighteenth-century art, to write the text, and Francis Watson agreed. Then, at the last minute, I mean four days before publication or something like that, Francis withdrew and said he wasn't well or couldn't do it, but he recommended me. He just barely knew me at that time. So the publisher invited me out to lunch and asked me if I could write it, more or less over the week-end, literally; it really was something like that. And that book I am rather ashamed of, actually, because I think there are one or two things that are quite definitely wrong in there, just out of ignorance.

SMITH: Of course this is something that art historians can find themselves sucked into and they can spin a lot of wheels producing these short little publishing books.

HASKELL: Absolutely. I think now, probably since the recession in England, that sort of thing has dropped, but at the time we're talking about, every publisher was wanting to get in on an introduction to whatever artist. But *The Age of the Grand Tour* was much less ambitious even than the least ambitious of



those. It really was one page, and I suppose again, at that time, I did put it into *Who's Who* and somehow it's got recorded. But I never ever mention it now. If I'm asked for my curriculum vitae for giving some lecture I wouldn't dream of mentioning it.

SMITH: The next substantive book is *Rediscoveries in Art*.

HASKELL: Yes. That is a different matter.

SMITH: That of course was the Wrightsman Lectures, but you had been working on this general subject matter for some time.

HASKELL: Yes, that's perfectly true. I don't know if I necessarily fully grasped this at the time, but in retrospect I can see, in a way, it was a consequence or partly a consequence of the aborted nineteenth-century book, in the sense that that was going to be rediscoveries in nineteenth-century art, and this was going to be rediscoveries of great artists. There was a chap in New York, and I hope he's still alive, who came to the lectures and he's written to me once or twice, a man called Stanley Meltzoff. Gombrich knew him, and I gather he's now completely given up art history and gone into deep-sea diving or something very, very, very improbable indeed. [laughter] Anyway, he wrote a couple of Marxist interpretations of this phenomenon about the Le Nain brothers [Antoine and Mathieu] and he was a Meyer Schapiroite I think also. I read two very interesting and useful articles by him in the *Art Bulletin* and they fired my

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imagination, partly because I didn't agree with them altogether, and then when I was asked to give the Wrightsman Lectures this did seem to me the ideal solution. Otherwise I don't know what I would have done, but this just happened to fit in, as far as timing and everything went. It seemed too good to be true. I gave a kind of dress rehearsal here, as I mentioned, but as it turned out I threw away the texts of the lectures I gave here because they were absolutely pointless—just flicking through them, they were totally different in every form, in organization, and everything else.

SMITH: Can you recall what the drift of the changes were?

HASKELL: In the lectures I was going to start from individual artists and follow their development; in other words, it would have been like six extended essays on six different artists, in a way. What critics would have said about that, I can't imagine; I'm already accused of lacking in theory, and that approach would have been very incoherent. The Wrightsman Lectures did have to be five lectures, and I realized that apart from anything else it would be quite impossible to do it in that way. Then I did get the idea which I thought would be incomparably more interesting, and I think I was right about this, to make it much more coherent and talk about actual developments affecting the artists, rather than just following the fortunes of Georges de La Tour or the Le Nain brothers all the way through. It involved certain complications of organization, but I felt that I'd done the right



thing. Although of course after having given the Wrightsman Lectures I was allowed to rewrite quite a lot of it again to make it more coherent.

SMITH: I'm just wondering, when you went to the Institute of Fine Arts and you gave these lectures, to what degree was there a conversation that developed that was substantive and helpful to you as an author?

HASKELL: Terribly little there, to be honest. One gave the lectures in the Metropolitan. My official host was Jonathan Brown. He was about to leave the Institute of Fine Arts and I virtually never saw him. I suppose he came to the first lecture, but otherwise I don't think I ever talked to him about them at all.

Mrs. Wrightsman herself invited me to the standard dinner after the first lecture and dinner party after the last, or whatever it was, but that was certainly not an intellectual exchange of ideas, you know; it was seeing the fabulous pictures she had and meeting very grand or very rich people. A few friends of mine are American art historians and some of them came to the lectures and we did discuss and talk about various aspects. I was asked to give one seminar at the Institute of Fine Arts and there were questions arising out of that, but to be honest, there was very little discussion. In a way, there was much more discussion here.

The lectures were quite a success in terms of numbers attending; everyone was very pleased and so on, but I wasn't there for very long. There were five lectures and I think they went down at about two a week, as far as I remember.

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I was there for about two and a half weeks, and during that time I did go up and gave one or two of the lectures at Harvard and at Yale, so I was moving around a lot. I was in a tremendous state of nerves worrying about the lectures.

Although I had written texts, I did spend a lot of time working on them even when I was there, worrying if they were going to be too long or too short, and whether I had too many slides or too few slides and so on. So I know it sounds very wrong, but somehow I don't think I would at that stage have wanted too much discussion because nothing would have been more disorientating than someone saying, "Well, you're completely wrong about this," when you've already written a lecture and you've got to give it next afternoon, do you know what I mean?

SMITH: Yes. But it does strike me that art history, in particular the named lecture series, is a whole other industry that does occupy a lot of time and energy that might be spent doing more serious, in-depth research.

HASKELL: I completely agree with you and the thing I've almost invariably tried to avoid otherwise is letting myself in for lectures which have to be published. This was a term of the Wrightsman arrangement, and I was the last of the Wrightsman lecturers; I sort of killed off the series, almost like the last of the Mohicans or something. I don't know if Mrs. Wrightsman got bored with the idea or it was Mr. Wrightsman's decision; anyway I was the last one. But I





terribly, terribly dislike giving lectures that have to be published, and I've had tremendous battles about that everywhere, because it does seem to me a very, very different form.

[Tape VI, Side Two]

SMITH: Aside from your writing, were you involved in this movement to recapture Bouguereau or Gérôme or Couture? Did you start to become a consultant for museums that were beginning to think about this?

HASKELL: Not really, no. It was looked upon as a slightly eccentric cause, and once I got going in this I did realize quite soon that I'd made a mistake, in a way. I did buy a Couture, though, which I couldn't possibly afford now.

SMITH: To what degree was your opinion solicited, say, for the planning of the Musée d'Orsay?

HASKELL: Absolutely not at all, no, but they invited me over to the opening, which was very jolly.

SMITH: So you can't claim responsibility for good or ill in that?

HASKELL: Absolutely not. Until I went into the museum I didn't know how the hanging was going to be or anything at all.

SMITH: Bouguereau seems to have somewhat of a currency right now.

HASKELL: Yes, oh enormously now. This, again, is one of the things that does run through my life like a sort of leitmotif, a constant theme: once it did



then get taken up and become very fashionable, then immediately I turned against it. This pupil of mine, Jon Whiteley, was very, very interested from the word go, and when I did come to Oxford of course that's what I still was very interested in, and he wrote a thesis, which I've still got here, on the neo-Grecs, which is one of these movements around Gérôme, and he was and still is terrifically keen on this, but I have cooled off quite a lot, really. At that time also I bought quite a lot of French books. You could buy the lives of all these nineteenth-century artists for absolutely nothing; they were remaindered on any quai and you could buy them for the equivalent of fifteen bob. Now of course the books themselves are fabulously expensive and also there are constant exhibition catalogs, as you say, on Bouguereau and Meissonier. In our department library I can tell you there have been a dozen of these things in the last two or three years. So the interest has grown enormously.

SMITH: As it grows then, you become less and less interested?

HASKELL: Yes, I'm afraid so. This is bad but this is the case. I do get rather fed up with the whole thing, yes.

SMITH: Now, is that because as it grows what is said becomes stupider and stupider?

HASKELL: Well, I do think that, yes, and I also think it was made to carry a kind of ideological charge, which I thought was wrong—what you might call the



Albert Boime sort of effect. I like Boime personally, but I do think anything he touches is wrong, ideologically. I think he tried to put a kind of ideological force into it, partly because of the sort of thing that Henri Zerner reproached me for enormously. I don't think it's terribly fair necessarily in relation to myself, but I think it has been enormously taken up on the basis of that, which is to say that all images are of equal value and a Bouguereau's just as good or just as bad as a Degas or a Cézanne. I don't believe that's true and I never believed that was true, but in the published version of the Wrightsman Lectures I did that fatal thing—it's what Pascal or someone says about how you can throw away the world for a *bon mot*, so to speak. I began with [Paul] Delaroche's mural showing all the painters, and I was writing at the time that this interest in French academic art was growing very, very strong, and my last words were, "It wouldn't surprise me if in some future work one should see Delaroche given as much prominence as he gave to Raphael in his *Hemicycle*," or something like that. I was rather proud of that; it was meant to be a sort of tremendously neat *boutade*, which gave a marvelous shape to the lecture, because I ended it that way. But Henri Zerner and others really thought that I felt this would be wonderful idea—and that I thought that Delaroche was just as great as Raphael. Well I didn't, but I agree that I couldn't resist just putting it in just as a kind of *jeu d'effet*. It did get rather irritating when people started saying that I thought everything was the





same, and against my will I was enrolled into this post-1968 school of thought. I felt very uneasy about that.

SMITH: One could interpret that as a nihilistic statement that is all the worse since you are sort of within the gates rather than outside.

HASKELL: Yes, I agree, and all that did happen. And of course, *Rediscoveries in Art* was in general widely acclaimed by people who were of that mind. This is why it infuriated Gombrich. Gombrich on the whole has been very generous in his reviews of my books, but the one really pretty hostile review he gave me once was for that one. He didn't like it at all. And in other ways I found myself being acclaimed by the most unlikely allies. I felt I should ask God to protect me from my friends, as it were.

SMITH: That suggests that ideology is more important than scholarship, regardless of what position the critic takes.

HASKELL: You mean for the critic?

SMITH: For the critic, yes.

HASKELL: I think that is very, very often the case, don't you? It certainly is the case that quite often you can tell almost in advance what a review is going to be because of the ideology of the critic.

SMITH: And in fact the more careful your scholarship is, perhaps the more bitter the criticism gets to be.



HASKELL: I think that certainly is the case, I agree.

SMITH: I did want to ask you about your interests in modern art in relationship to this, for the record. Do you take much interest in modern art, or contemporary art?

HASKELL: No, I think it really would be hypocritical to say I do; I don't follow trends in contemporary art.

SMITH: Are there twentieth-century artists from any period that you love?

HASKELL: Oh well, yes. Braque, Matisse—that generation is absolutely wonderful, yes. I don't go along with the idea that all Picasso's work is wonderful, but obviously I think he's a great artist. I love Braque and Matisse much, much more than Picasso, but I accept the idea that Picasso's a great artist.

SMITH: What about post-1945 artists?

HASKELL: Well them much, much less. I think I may have mentioned this in one of our earlier sessions. One of the things I think is very sad for people like myself is to develop at a time when you're not in sympathy with what is creatively counted as being most important—I think possibly wrongly, but that is the case. I don't feel totally wrong about this because at any rate, until pretty recently, I did follow developments in the cinema and I have liked modern films.

SMITH: You mean like [Federico] Fellini?

HASKELL: Yes, all the Italian directors after the war, and a good many of the



American ones. I'd go to almost every new film until about ten years ago, and on the whole, I felt in sympathy. If there was going to be a new film by one of the directors I liked I would say, "Well, we must go and see it." But if I'm now told there's going to be a new exhibition somewhere of art in the last ten years, I certainly won't feel I must go and see it. I may go and see it out of a sense of duty, but when it comes to the cinema I would want to go. So I use that to justify the fact that I'm not completely cut off.

SMITH: What about [poetry or] fiction?

HASKELL: Well, again, I do read quite a lot of poetry. [Philip] Larkin is the last poet I read fairly consistently, and I absolutely loved [W. H.] Auden, but that was quite a time ago. To me Auden is actually the greatest poet of the twentieth century, greater than Eliot and greater than Yeats. I really am a tremendous admirer of him. About contemporary poetry, again, I can't pretend that I follow it.

SMITH: What about Seamus Heaney?

HASKELL: I have read poems by him, and quite often I do think they're good, but if you're asking me what I would carry around in my emotional baggage or something, it would be Auden. Auden's poem on the death of Yeats to me is the finest single poem of the twentieth century; that is a poem I read and read. That really is a part of my emotional equipment, so to speak. I would hate that poem





and my feelings about it to go out of my mind. But that was written a long time ago, around 1939.

SMITH: Particularly in Britain, contemporary architecture has been an issue of great debate and distress. Do you take an interest in contemporary architecture?

HASKELL: Well, obviously one has to, in the sense that you do see it all around you, if you see what I mean. There, the things I do care passionately about are things like museums; that's where it affects me personally, and there again I don't think this is terribly original but I enormously admire the architect in America who did the Kimbell Art Museum at Fort Worth.

SMITH: Oh, Louis Kahn?

HASKELL: Louis Kahn. I think that was a masterly museum, which I terrifically admire. I suppose it is museum developments that I follow most, and that, I think, is incomparably the best museum since the war, without question, and possibly the whole century. I think it's terrible that he hasn't survived.

I think the new architect that the Getty's chosen for their museum is the worst architect that has ever been in history as far as museums go, Richard Meier. To my mind, he really ought to be locked up for the museum he built in Frankfurt. I can't think why the Getty chose him, but that's a different matter.

SMITH: Going back from the cultural to the social, England is a society that has undergone at least one social revolution in your lifetime, it seems to me, and it

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved.

2. The second part of the paper describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed discussion of the different types of data that can be collected and the various techniques used to analyze this data.

3. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study. It includes a detailed discussion of the findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from these findings. It also includes a discussion of the limitations of the study and the need for further research.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for practice. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to improve the performance of the business and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

5. The fifth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for policy. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to inform the development of policy and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

6. The sixth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for the future. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to inform the development of the future and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

7. The seventh part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for the present. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to improve the performance of the business and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

8. The eighth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for the past. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to inform the development of the past and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

9. The ninth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for the future. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to inform the development of the future and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

10. The tenth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study for the present. It includes a discussion of the various ways in which the findings of the study can be used to improve the performance of the business and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

struck me from our discussions that you were a person who was part of that revolution in the sense that personally you seemed to express a need for the change, though you may not be particularly sympathetic with the specific changes that have developed. I'm wondering if you feel that is accurate. There's a sense that there are aspects of the older way that were corrupt and unfair.

HASKELL: Yes, that is clearly true. Of course I do accept that. I suppose you're also right in saying that I don't like every aspect of the form it has taken, but it would be absolutely idiotic to say that everything could or indeed should have gone on as it was before.

SMITH: I wonder how you view the role of erudition and the classics in learning, in terms of responding to this situation. Sometimes one feels that somebody like Forster had a utopian vision of a republic of letters that simply would not have been workable. Maybe it was workable in the Cambridge situation.

HASKELL: No, obviously I think you're dead right about this, but equally obviously I don't see how one can have any beliefs, ideas, or hopes, or indeed fears for society unless one has some utopian vision. You've got to have something which you know deep down is not practical, is not going to work out the way you hoped. Obviously the Labour Party, and presumably every serious political party, including no doubt the neofascists in Italy, have some sort of view



of what they would like to happen, even though, unless one talks to a fanatic or a fundamentalist, they will realize perfectly clearly that the chances of it happening in reality are remote.

So I've got very strong views, to this extent: I accept entirely the idea that the social changes or many of the social changes that have happened have been necessary and desirable, but as far as they affect the cultural side of it and the educational side of it, which we've talked about, I must admit that I do feel terribly strongly that it has gone in the wrong way. I have a kind of stake in this because something that I have tremendously believed in and one of the very, very few what you might call public causes that I have ever involved myself in—and by "involved myself" I don't mean demonstrating and waving flags or throwing bombs, but just writing to the papers—has been things like keeping museums free. I passionately believe in keeping museums free to the public. I enormously disapprove of the Metropolitan or the Louvre or any museum charging admission. I think it's going to happen everywhere, I'm afraid, but as far as what you might call the cultural impact of the social revolution, as it were, I'm very, very against the museums charging.

I'm almost equally against "jazzing up" the museums. I don't mean not displaying things decently, but sort of pushing the museums into what I would call degrading the art, and I feel exactly the same about education and everything





else. I don't think that education ought to try and make any intellectual concessions. By that I don't mean to say that things shouldn't be done as clearly as possible, but I would like museum education to be available to everyone. I think my utopian ideals are very clear; they're the same as [John] Ruskin's or William Morris's were in England, and everyone else, you know, who wanted the absolute highest culture, but available for everybody.

I don't know how much this applies to America, but in England there used to be two political traditions in relation to the arts—the left and the right. Right-wing people can be pretty philistine, and although it would now be described as elitist or condescending, the conservative right did have a kind of general view that buildings and museums should be open and that everyone could visit them, and they were proud of their museums and their cities and everything else. This was part of what now would just be called the whole power complex. Anyway, that did exist on the right wing. Now, the left wing had an equally strong commitment to culture, which was what you might call the William Morris strand, that it must be made available to everyone, and museums must be kept free and open in the evenings—all this sort of thing. What has happened now in England, it seems to me, is that any commitment to culture from any side has been completely thrown over. I don't want to be paranoid and say it all happened exclusively because of Mrs. Thatcher, but certainly there has been this



Thatcherite strain in English public life, which says that the main point of cultural institutions is that they must earn their own keep, and therefore if you can't keep a museum going without charging or without selling things, then you don't have the museum; that's the right-wing. The left wing has completely thrown over their tradition by saying, "It's elitist; it was only created for an aristocracy, and what you've got to do is encourage pop groups."

So, to my mind, talking about utopian visions, I do think both sides did have visions which were to my mind perfectly decent and acceptable alternative visions, and now both of them have thrown them over. My impression is that this has also happened in America, but it certainly has happened very, very much here, and it has happened a great deal on the Continent—France and elsewhere. I'm afraid now I have a kind of anti-utopian vision of what's likely to happen.

SMITH: Part of this could be called an aspect of the death of ideology that Daniel Bell talked about now thirty-five years ago [in his book *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*], but what's the alternative to an ideological vision? You have certainly been an anti-ideologue in your own work, but what is the alternative?

HASKELL: Well, I agree with you. It is much, much easier to diagnose what's happened than to prescribe the right medicine, as one finds out anytime one goes to the doctor. When you go with an ache he'll tell you what it is, but he can't do



anything about it, so to speak. I've an awful feeling that this is the only way I can answer you. When you asked me what I actually felt about its repercussions on cultural life, I know exactly what I feel about it, and I know exactly what I would like to happen. In the middle of the wildest areas of the slums, where people are killing each other every day, I would like everyone to be reading Plato and listening to Mozart. As I say this of course I realize the absolute ridiculousness of it, but if you ask me what I actually do believe in, that's it, and it is what a lot of terribly, terribly serious and marvelous people in the late nineteenth century thought could happen, and they did indeed go some way to making it happen. Now I think it's been thrown over. I can't answer you about how to bring that utopia about, obviously. I don't think anyone would be able to answer, but I just happen to know what my utopia is. This is part of ideology and everything else, so when you ask about the impact of social revolutions in my lifetime and so on, that is certainly the aspect of it that I most deplore, really.

SMITH: But in quantitative terms, the numbers of people who are going to museums seem to have increased geometrically.

HASKELL: I know, absolutely—at least if the statistics are true. I'm vaguely involved with this because I'm a trustee of two museums and we have to spend our time agonizing about whether enough people go in, and will the government close us down if we don't get enough visitors and everything else. What none of





us quite know is how much these statistics reflect an enormous increase in tourism, just generally. After all, if you think of it, the number of tourists who come to England, and indeed to America or anywhere else now has increased so much and the museums are still places which people do feel they have to go because to some extent it's probably almost the only thing that makes them different from anything else back home.

SMITH: That's probably true, but places like the Detroit Institute of Arts or the Toledo Art Museum, both of which are very fine museums, have had the same kind of increases, and they are certainly not in tourist areas.

HASKELL: I didn't know about that; that is very interesting. I know about the English and the French end, where it has enormously increased, and that is I think quite widely felt to be the result of a great increase in tourism. I'm delighted to hear about Detroit and Toledo. Perhaps utopia will be founded in Detroit or Toledo; it might as well start there. [laughter]

SMITH: Your next major book after *Rediscoveries in Art* seems to be *Taste in the Antique*.

HASKELL: I know exactly how that book happened. Unlike almost everything else I've written, I remember the exact moment. It was important in one way because it brought this friend, Nicholas Penny, into my life. I was with Larissa, my wife, and a couple of Italian friends, driving through France, and it was a



summer which was famous in Europe because for about three months it just never rained. Everything was dry and parched and even our house was affected structurally; it was a terrific drought and very hot. We were fairly near Paris and our friends wanted to go to there for three or four days, and I hate Paris in really hot weather, so Larissa and I decided to stay in a small hotel in Versailles. Our Italian friends went to Paris and after four days we planned to meet either in Versailles or Paris and continue touring in the provinces.

Versailles was quite nice, because you could at least breathe there. We wandered around the grounds, and I kept on seeing great sculptures, which clearly were copies after antique sculptures. One or two of them, like the *Apollo Belvedere*, I obviously knew, but I was deeply embarrassed to find out that I hadn't the foggiest idea about a lot of them. I recognized they must be antique replicas, but I hadn't any idea what they were. I did think it was rather embarrassing. If all these copies had been made in the seventeenth century, they must have been thought of as being important, and it was very odd that I didn't know what they were. So I made notes and when I came back I decided to find out about a few of these famous things.

Then this chap, Nicholas Penny, whom I didn't really know at all well, was coming to stay with us for some reason; he had to give a lecture in Oxford or something. I suppose we'd met about three or four times before, and of all



the younger art historians, he was the first person I really tremendously took to and liked very much indeed. Anyway, he came and stayed with us in our spare room here in this house, and at dinner or over a drink or something I mentioned the Versailles sculptures. His great subject at the time was English sculpture, and for totally different reasons, he'd almost reached the same stage as I had. It was one of those really rather uncanny situations, because he was working on English eighteenth-century sculpture and he also kept on finding things he didn't know. So we then said, "Why don't we do a little handbook on these, with photographs. It probably won't take more than two or three weeks." I remember thinking this. He was teaching at Manchester at the time and I was here. We thought it would be terribly, terribly easy and very quick, and it would just be useful to us.

I don't think we'd even thought of publishing it at the time; it was just for ourselves and it would be useful. Then, of course, like all books one starts, thinking it's going to be very, very quick, we suddenly found that the problem was much bigger than we thought. There were far more sculptures than we'd imagined, which were really very important. In retrospect, I can see that this research fit in both with the nineteenth-century French project and with *Rediscoveries in Art*. We found ourselves digging up things which were unpopular, disregarded, and enormously despised by all the archaeologists and the

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classical historians. These were things that didn't even get into the history books. The more I talk to you the more I realize that a great, great deal of my intellectual life has been spurred by my opposition to reigning views. I suppose it just did irritate me that people didn't admire these things or take an interest in them.

We then worked in very close collaboration. It's quite difficult writing a book with someone else, especially someone who's much younger, and someone I didn't at the time know well. Of course I now know him very well, and I got to know him through writing the book. He would come down for weekends here and he'd just had twin daughters and it wasn't all that easy for him to get away, but anyway he did, and we used to sit up, really, the whole night when he came here. You know, that is a way of making or breaking a friendship, if you see what I mean, and in our case I think it made it. Then it involved a lot of traveling and seeing whatever we could. There were phone calls, letters, post cards, God knows what, and I must say, I tremendously enjoyed doing it.

We couldn't just make a list or a catalog, we had to write introductory chapters, so we divided them up between us and then we would make corrections or make changes in each other's work. I see Nick all the time now, and sometimes he gets or I get a letter from someone who read the book asking specific questions about something or other, and we really have reached the stage

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying a natural curiosity about the past, but also a means of developing a sense of responsibility for the future.

2. The second part of the paper discusses the various methods of historical research. It is pointed out that the study of history is not a simple matter of looking up facts in a book. It is a process of investigation and discovery. The author discusses the various methods of historical research, including the study of primary sources, the use of secondary sources, and the use of modern techniques of historical research.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying a natural curiosity about the past, but also a means of developing a sense of responsibility for the future.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the various methods of historical research. It is pointed out that the study of history is not a simple matter of looking up facts in a book. It is a process of investigation and discovery. The author discusses the various methods of historical research, including the study of primary sources, the use of secondary sources, and the use of modern techniques of historical research.

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of just forgetting who wrote which chapter. One or two bits I can remember of course writing myself, but whole chunks of it I just genuinely can't remember any more now. But in retrospect I do see how it enormously fits in with lots of other projects.

SMITH: Some of the American reviews I looked at did seem naturally to relate it to the "canon wars," as we call them.

HASKELL: I've obviously seen some of the American reviews, but there were probably lots of others I didn't see, because the publishers send on some things and not others. I keep on repeating this, and really it must be rather fatuous, but I think until you've done something and someone tells you what you've done, you don't quite realize it yourself. Just as I described earlier on, in reference to other things, once again we were both rather taken up by what you might call the David Watkins of the world, which I didn't terribly want. We wanted to do the book as a sort of contribution to the history of taste, as we both made clear. What is undeniably true is that the more we got into it the more we did genuinely begin to admire a lot of these sculptures.

Then I remember quite well a young German art historian who came to see me and congratulated me on this brilliant contribution to postmodern thought or something, and this had never *begun* to occur to me. I doubt that the concept of postmodernism had ever come into our thoughts at any time while we were



writing the book. I can remember when the phrase was first used but certainly not in Oxford or Manchester until relatively recently. So it was taken up in a way that we really hadn't intended. I think one's always glad for any praise from whatever quarter, but it certainly wasn't the idea we had in mind when doing it.

SMITH: What about *The Painful Birth of the Art Book*?

HASKELL: I should have remembered that one when we were talking earlier about lectures that had to be published. That was a commissioned lecture and publication was required under the terms of the commission. One of the editors at Thames and Hudson, Nick Stangos, asked if I would give the lecture. I had already been very interested in the topic, I suppose. I'm trying to think quite how it worked out. I think it must have come about while Nick and I were doing *Taste and the Antique*; it was just a fusion of these things. The whole question of art book illustration did become very, very important. I've always been fascinated by links between France, Italy and England, for obvious reasons, and then suddenly, almost in the same way as the Wrightsman Lectures, it struck me as such a marvelous idea to choose that subject for a lecture in honor of an art book publisher. So that sort of fit in, luckily, with what I was doing. Once again, it was a commission that happened at exactly the right moment, and I enjoyed doing it. It's not terribly long; I've got masses more material now of course, but it's not a very long book.

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SMITH: Then of course your next book, *History and its Images*, is a very major work.

HASKELL: Well, that certainly is a long book, yes.

SMITH: In some ways it does seem to flow naturally out of things that you'd been writing for the previous twenty-five years, but at the same time there are new directions in it, and the move to look at images as discursive seems to me both new and contemporary.

HASKELL: I'm always glad to be new and contemporary, so to speak, and once again, people have told me it does seem a kind of logical progression. I dedicated it to Nicholas Penny, and I did say that some of the ideas came while we were working together, which is true, because so many of these ancient sculptures that had been so admired and that were so much copied were thought to represent, in pre-Winckelmann days, famous episodes of Roman history: a slave who had loyally served his master and saved him from conspiracy had been rewarded with a statue, and that sort of thing; this was very much what people expected monuments to be. In other words, the idea that these were mythological things was very, very rare, except in obvious cases like the *Laocoön* or the *Apollo Belvedere*. As far as possible, writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tried to interpret these ancient sculpture as historical documents. While working on this, Nick and I often used to talk about this as being curious or

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interesting. It did involve rereading quite a lot of books for the first time since school—Roman history and one thing or another—to find out what actually had happened at the time and how it could have been interpreted in this way. So I remember that experience as a kind of immediate stimulus to doing this book, and I can see subsequently that it links up with other things I did before.

I think I mentioned this yesterday, but quite often I have been very excited by one particular article or book, and Momigliano wrote a terribly famous essay called "Ancient History and the Antiquarian." In a way, the whole of *History and Its Images* could be looked on as the most gigantic footnote of all time to a fifteen- or twenty-page essay by Momigliano. He discussed various moments when historical skepticism did prevail, which he was keen to demolish, I think, very reasonably. I don't think he's completely right, for various reasons, but he very reasonably describes what happened during the seventeenth-century religious wars when propaganda came out from both Protestants and Catholics and no one could believe anything, and a skepticism developed which then extended to other periods. Then people started believing that the one way you could be sure of something would be to make it into a monument. If it's a monument, or an actual coin or a medal, it couldn't be falsified. This is what people believed and of course they were wrong because these things can be falsified, and of course they're very, very difficult to interpret. Bits of that of course I found out for



myself while writing the earlier book.

Of course, I was aware of current debates, if only from book reviews. It doesn't often happen that people interview me, but occasionally it does happen for newspapers and so on, and people probably don't take enough account of how much information I derive not from reading books but from reading reviews of books. I read the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New York Review of Books* and one thing and another, and it's most unfair to the author, and I terribly resent people doing this to me—not reading my book and just reading a review of it—but I think ideas do come even in that way; they certainly do to me. I was acutely aware of the idea of people once again saying the past is a sort of entire fiction, and just made up to suit the convenience of the ruling class at any given moment and so on; the kind of historical skepticism which had existed for a time in the seventeenth century and then certainly vanished after the impact of nineteenth-century positivism, and now is to some extent back again. So I was aware of that, but then I'm afraid I was aware also that the solution offered in the seventeenth century, that monuments were to be trusted even if words were not, didn't really work for the reasons that I set out to explore in about five or six hundred pages!

As I mentioned, there is a review by Lawrence Stone in one of the papers today. I suppose all authors think that reviews aren't as generous as they should

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be. Stone's is rather a hostile review, which slightly upset me, or at any rate certainly surprised me. He said I took a sort of jaundiced view of all my predecessors in the field and that I'm terribly unfair to Burckhardt. This does rather surprise me because Nick Penny read the book in manuscript and said that the great effect of the book was that I fall over so far backwards to approve of everything that everyone's written in the past that there's no judgment of my own. At any rate, I would be rather sorry if this was felt to be the case, because the one thing I was not trying to do was to mock or deride people's efforts. I think it did turn out to be a bit of a wild-goose chase, and I also did say in the introduction, which I don't think Lawrence could have read, that I don't necessarily believe that if you discuss a kind of historical method, you've just got to propose answers. I think you can write a history of medicine without knowing how to cure illness, and that's the kind of thing I was trying; I was trying to write the history of a notion, the history of an idea, without trying to say what could be done.

[Tape VII, Side One]

SMITH: In many respects *History and Its Images* is, I think, a very good example of what has been called the "new art history," even though, in many respects, it's also very Burckhardtian in that you're taking art history back into general history and into intellectual and cultural history. But to what degree



could this book have only have been written by an art historian? To what degree is your art history background essential to the way you have structured the argument and presented the evidence?

HASKELL: I think that's a very, very fair and challenging question. I also think the assumption behind your question is right; in other words, the book didn't need a trained art historian to write it, except in the sense that no one but art historians actually have looked at all these things, if you see what I mean. This will be the most damning thing if anyone gets hold of it, but if my book had been written, say, in 1880 rather than 1980, I think it might be then that kind of thing I go on deploring—this lost utopia or whatever it might be, when people looked more at things, or had more time to look. In any case, there were almost no art historians in the 1880s in the sense of the word now. When I think about that book, as far as the method goes, I think a great deal of your assumption is correct. But the fact does remain that I don't know of any what you might call "ordinary" historian, or indeed cultural historian, who has looked at so much art as is involved in that book. Obviously, when I was writing the book I did go and look at everything again. I traveled with Larissa all over Belgium and Holland to look at various pictures and that sort of thing, but I was already aware of all these works of art. The only thing in that book I really had to learn from scratch, if I can put it that way, probably was ancient coins and medals, which I

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the statistical analysis performed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study. It includes a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the findings of the research. The data shows a clear trend of increasing activity over time.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results have significant implications for the field of study and may lead to further research in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the main findings and provides a final statement on the importance of the research.

really knew nothing about; that was a completely new departure for me. I think the rest of the book was a matter of trying to sort out all the images I had seen.

So while the actual methods I used could have been used by a non-art historian, I can't think of any "ordinary" historian, in our times, who has looked at all these things. This is really not meant to be boasting; it is meant to be what I genuinely believe is a factual statement. Curiously enough, I think people are incomparably more musically educated than they are visually educated, so I think one could imagine people writing books with similar scope about music, even if they're not trained music historians; I think that's possible.

SMITH: Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches* doesn't have the scope of your book, though it certainly is thick.

HASKELL: Yes, I reviewed his book, and I do think that of all the books using the visual arts as historical evidence, this is the most interesting example, but that book was about the Dutch seventeenth century, which is a more limited period. I think it might be possible to argue that in my book one would have to be to some extent an art historian, for instance, in the chapter on the notion of quality and decline in art. I think one would have to know the nature of the debates that have taken place about that, and one could learn that as an outsider, of course, but, nonetheless, I think it would be more difficult. You see, what happened in that book on the whole—and this was a risk I took quite deliberately,

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and it has rather relieved me that I haven't been knocked on the head for it—is that when it came to the historians I was writing about, I confined myself almost exclusively to the primary sources and read them, because the literature on Gibbon or Michelet alone would have taken me years to read.

SMITH: That was a calculated risk.

HASKELL: It was a calculated risk. Of course to some extent it paid off in the sense that it doesn't terribly worry me if someone says that Michelet was quite wrong about something, because I'm saying that that's not really what I'm interested in; I'm just interested in what he says. It doesn't even terribly worry me if someone says that I've got Michelet wrong, because in a later edition it shows something else. I still say, "Well, this is what was published in 1827," or something, so, yes, it was a calculated risk, but it was the only way. I realized quite early on that it was going to be far more sensible to read the historians as primary sources only—their diaries, their journals, and their letters, and anything else I could find.

Now when it came to the art history side, that wasn't possible because that really does involve a sort of knowledge. For instance, in the chapter on [Johan] Huizinga I couldn't even read the primary sources because they were all in Dutch. I met a very nice man in Holland and he advised me to read the German translation of this and the French translation of that, and so on, so I read

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various offices of the corporation. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and each name is followed by the office to which he or she has been appointed. The list is as follows:

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everything I possibly could in the primary sources, but I couldn't read Huizinga's letters, which I'd have liked to have done. But when it came to the artists in that Huizinga chapter, I really did have to know about art history because then I had to know if there was any significance in the fact that Huizinga had chosen to discuss one artist rather than another. For instance, he never discussed [Hieronymus] Bosch and he almost never discussed Rogier van der Weyden. He had discussed van Eyck at length but he hadn't discussed Robert Campin, and that sort of thing. Now that is art-historical knowledge that I just did have to have. My theory about that was that if he had chosen certain other artists, he might have reached quite different conclusions. But that means that I did have to know who all the artists were and what they looked like, and I had to know, or suggest, or imply, or believe myself that Robert Campin looked different from Jan van Eyck, which involved some knowledge of art history and what artists were known at the time Huizinga was writing, as opposed just to reading the primary sources: Huizinga, Michelet, and Gibbon.

So when you ask about that, and I think it is an interesting and good question, I do think in each case my argument—I'm trying to avoid the use of the word "theory"—or my idea in the book is that when discussing these historians it is very important to know what they actually saw, instead of making general statements like, "In the nineteenth century people loved Fra Angelico." This may



be looked upon as pedantic, but nonetheless it is a very, very firm conviction of mine, and that, to some extent, does involve art history.

SMITH: To what degree is that still an art history where the object is at the center?

HASKELL: Well, in my work the object certainly is not at the center the way it is for a connoisseur writing about the development of Jan van Eyck. I probably haven't touched on this yet in our discussions, but it is a tremendously firm belief of mine: Just as Gombrich argues again and again that there's no such thing as an innocent eye as far as the painter's concerned—Constable doesn't just sit down and paint a landscape; he's correcting his predecessors, as it were—so I'm absolutely totally convinced that almost no one who looks at a work of art just likes or dislikes it in the abstract or thinks it's good or bad in the abstract. We are all stirred by other people to go and look at museums containing these objects. If my critics, enemies, or whatever one calls them, would say that in my book art objects were being used to satisfy the vanity of historians, or whatever it may be, I would deny that very, very strongly indeed and say that those objects, those pictures we go to look at now, we go and look at partly because historians like Michelet or Gibbon or Huizinga, just as the art historians, have conditioned us to look at them, and made us look at them in a particular way. I would be very upset if people said that mine is a kind of historical writing which dismisses





the object itself as of no importance.

SMITH: So the object is not simply a subjective construction?

HASKELL: No, I would say not.

SMITH: We have discussed a number of your books today, but I'm wondering if there are interpretations that you've made at one point and now feel a little less certain about. Are there positions you've taken that now seem much less solid?

HASKELL: You mean, in any book?

SMITH: Yes, in any book.

HASKELL: Gosh yes, there must be, because with new editions and things I have changed things a bit.

SMITH: I suppose part of my question is the degree to which your work can be viewed as an oeuvre, where you're correcting and recorrecting yourself in the form of an internal dialogue, so you have a project, but it's not like one triumphant milestone after another.

HASKELL: Well, obviously there are things in earlier books that I would change.

SMITH: I'm not talking about points of fact.

HASKELL: No, no. I've got an article from Ellis Waterhouse here which he signed, "To Francis from Ellis, with love from the enemy," because someone had said that he's my enemy. What he said, and a lot of people have said, is that in



*Patrons and Painters* I gave a misleading account because I didn't discuss Rome in the eighteenth century. I went off to eighteenth-century Venice and I totally underestimated the importance of eighteenth-century Rome. I know there was an American book out just a month or two ago which has said that, and this comment is quite frequent, but I don't think even now I would change what I wrote. I suppose I'd be more apologetic about my method now, but I don't think I would change that. It sounds terribly absurd, but I do think, for instance, that my venture into French academic painting of the nineteenth century came to nothing—except a couple of articles emerged from it—but I don't regret it because it did stimulate me to do things in other fields, such as *Rediscoveries in Art*. Thinking back can be so misleading, but I somehow can't quite imagine myself going straight from *Patrons and Painters* to *Rediscoveries in Art* if I hadn't in the meantime broken off into a completely new field, and even if that new field proved abortive, so to speak, I think it did give me the impulse to go back to something I could cope with. I don't know if that's getting anywhere near answering what you were asking, really.

SMITH: Well, it's not necessarily a question that has a concise answer, but it is a question to see to what degree there is this internal dialogue that's directing your project. For example, I think most people, in the brief synopsis form, think of you as a pioneer in patronage studies, and yet it strikes me that perhaps



patronage studies is not really your main project.

HASKELL: I think that is perfectly true. I think you could say one of the questions that does most interest me is why we do like certain works of art; this does obsess me. Of course various people give various kinds of answers to this question. Psychologists give all sorts of answers, as we know, and I believe one can attempt a sort of historical answer, or an answer based on history rather than psychology. I suppose you could say that that idea lies to some extent at the basis of *Rediscoveries in Art and Taste and the Antique* and my current book [*History and its Images*]; all those are different attempts to answer the question, Why, if I go into a gallery, do I look at such and such a picture and like it or not like it?

SMITH: Another way of phrasing that statement that I think would be a way that you probably would bristle at, is, How do certain images achieve hegemonic status in a given time? [laughter]

HASKELL: I will bristle, but I agree. I can't quite see why it's an improvement on what I was saying, but as you say, I think it's another way of saying the same thing.

SMITH: Well, it connects you with another trend of thinking in Anglo-American academia that has been very prevalent during your lifetime, but it also shifts the emphasis from the individual to the social structure, which seems to me, if we're





actually asking why people respond in certain ways, and if we say there's a uniformity in response, then we have to get back to social structure. Whether hegemony is the right way to do it or not, I don't know, and in fact I doubt it, actually.

HASKELL: I do see what you mean.

SMITH: So a history of taste becomes a history of taste-makers.

HASKELL: Well, in part, yes, but only in part. The art historian who is most unlike me in the whole world, Wölfflin, said not everything was possible at all times. I think it was Wölfflin who said that. Let's imagine that in 1750 someone out of the blue fell in love with Botticelli. I don't think anything much would have happened. I mean, we'd be absolutely riveted to discover in his private diaries: "I've discovered the most wonderful picture in the world; it's by Botticelli."

SMITH: I have to assume there was at least one person in Europe who loved Botticelli.

HASKELL: I think it's quite likely, but we don't know anything about him or her. And that in itself is part of the problem—why is that the case? In 1850 when someone said, "I think Botticelli's absolutely wonderful," everyone started trying to collect Botticellis, but in 1750 they weren't doing that. These are the kinds of things I think are very interesting.



SMITH: Of course in 1850 the statement is so banal that it becomes meaningless; you don't know what it means for someone to love Botticelli. I'm exaggerating, but—

HASKELL: Yes, at any rate certainly by 1870. I completely agree with you, but what I mean to say is that it is an acceptable thing to say, obviously. I think in 1850 people would slightly raise an eyebrow, and say, "Do you really mean that? What about Raphael?" and so on. But twenty years later, it's obviously totally acceptable to like Botticelli, and I agree it doesn't matter whether one did like Botticelli or not; one knew that one could say this without being looked upon as a crank or anything else. But in 1750, I agree that probably some fascinating person wandered around and thought, "This is absolutely wonderful." But we don't know anything about him or her, unfortunately.



SESSION FOUR: 24 APRIL, 1994

[Tape VIII, Side One]

SMITH: You had some points that you wanted to raise from our previous discussions.

HASKELL: Yes, I've been thinking a bit, and trying to sum up in my own mind some of the things I've been saying, and it has occurred to me again and again that I have perhaps overstressed, and then perhaps overapologized for having overstressed the fact that I felt that the work I was doing was isolated, and not very much of it emerged from discussions with other people. That was one thing that I seemed to be making a lot of, and the other thing that I suppose I've been making a lot of in reverse is that every time you've been asking me to what extent I've been affected by new ideas, deconstruction, or new developments in sociological theory, or whatever it might be, in a rather hopeless way I've been saying that I haven't read the books or I don't know anything about them. Last night I was thinking about this, and I somehow felt like a schoolboy or indeed a research student of my own coming up for interview and failing tests catastrophically. I mean, if a research student came to me and I said, "Can you think of any painting by Raphael?" and he said, "No. I don't actually know anything about him," I suppose I would have a pretty dim view of him. I was wondering about that, and that's clearly what has been happening here. Then,





carrying on with that, I was wondering whether and to what extent I ought to be feeling apologetic about it—not so much to you, because I think my duty to you is just to be honest and say what is the truth, but to some extent to myself. Is this fact of isolation and the fact that I haven't read any of the things that I ought to have read a tremendous, terrible weakness? Is it letting down anything seriously, and does it mean that everything I've been doing is frivolous? I thought about that quite a lot, and then—as one never wants to admit total frivolity about one's work—I came to the conclusion that the historians and art historians of the past whom I most admire, who I do think are the greatest and the most interesting figures, have been to some extent in the same boat, and if you'd been interviewing most of them I think you might have come up with the same sort of answers. Now what I want to make absolutely 100 percent clear is that I'm really not trying to associate myself with them in any terms of actual stature; that's not at all what I have in mind, and it's terribly, terribly important that you and whoever else ever listens to these tapes realizes that. Nonetheless, I somehow do think it is rather true.

I was trying to think last night about people who have made contributions of real value to art history, beginning with people who have made contributions of a totally different nature to anything I've ever attempted. I was thinking, for instance, what if one had talked in the early nineteenth century to the great



Germans, who, to a large extent, invented connoisseurship, which is exactly the sort of thing I've been saying I don't do—I'm thinking of German art historians like [Johann David] Passavant, or Waagen. Passavant's book on Raphael is usually looked upon as almost the first major serious monograph on an artist, and there is Waagen's book on van Eyck, and his book on art in English collections [*Treasures of Art in Great Britain*]. These were people who did start off by reading and by being interested in all kinds of literature, and by implication they should have been interested in the Foucaults of their own day, except of course the Foucaults of their own day weren't anything like Foucault but were the people who were associating early Italian art or early Flemish art to religious background and so on. So you might well have asked them, "Have you been reading Chateaubriand?" or whoever it might be—people responsible for the early Christian revival in Europe. Unless I'm completely wrong I think they would have said, "Well, yes, we did begin looking at those a bit, but then we rapidly gave that up and all the serious work we've done since has been as a consequence of not reading it. We've completely given up following literature about early Christianity. We've broken away from that and we're now interested in which particular painting or which particular drawing was actually by Raphael or by his pupils."

Now I use that example because that is a case of someone moving away



from what you might call intellectual or cultural history to connoisseurship. If you then moved on for instance to the art historian, or the historian, whichever you choose to call him, whom I do most admire, and I've mentioned frequently in these talks, Burckhardt, I think he might have said exactly the same sort of thing. One inevitably would have said to him, "Well, to what extent do you follow Hegel? Presumably you are interested in Hegelian views?" I know that Burckhardt started writing after Hegel was dead, but still, nonetheless, Foucault's now dead also, and Hegel really would have been the kind of Foucault of the time, or at any rate the Hegelians would have been, and there were many Hegelian art historians. I think Burckhardt would have said, "No, I can't begin to understand Hegel." I know that Gombrich has suggested that there are traces of Hegelianism in Burckhardt, sort of *malgré lui*, so to speak, but Burckhardt did quite specifically say that he couldn't understand Hegel, that it was all meaningless to him and he wasn't really interested in this at all, and what he was doing was something completely different. I think Burckhardt would have in that way felt very, very isolated when he was writing his book on the civilization of the Italian Renaissance, which is universally acknowledged to be a very great book and certainly his greatest book. I think he would have felt isolated and not at all in touch with the Foucaults of his day.

If you move on to the beginning of this century, I think exactly the same





thing about an art historian whom I enormously admire, Aby Warburg. I don't think he was in touch with the sociologists or the psychologists of his own day. He was certainly interested in psychology, I'm not denying that, but as far as I know—and my knowledge of his life depends on Gombrich's intellectual biography of him—he was working in isolation and not in touch with contemporary developments in theory. Now, I do want to make clear in the strongest way I possibly can that I'm not comparing myself to Passavant, or Waagen, or Burckhardt, or Warburg, but this idea did begin to occur to me last night.

Two things happened last night after I left you. There's this Spanish translation of *History and Its Images*, and I'm writing a special introduction for the Spanish edition. To some extent I discuss the reception to the book, saying that it has been well received, which it has, but the criticism is made that it hasn't got a theoretical framework. Since that criticism was made even in England, which is notoriously the country of nontheory and empiricism, then the reception to the book on the Continent and Spain, which is obviously clearly linked up with French and German ideas much more than England is, might be even more surprised or hostile. So that thought also occurred to me. I had my usual insomnia and I began meditating or rethinking things.

What I'm wanting to say, I hope without any arrogance, is that I'm not at



all equating myself with these people, but I came away yesterday feeling tremendously like someone who'd failed an interview. I'm not suggesting for one single second you've given me this impression, but I felt this in myself, you know, the exact way that a pupil of mine might feel. When pupils come to me as research students, I'm always saying, "Have you read so-and-so?" And if a pupil answers no to every question of that kind, which I feel in a way that I've been doing with you, it begins to worry me. But then I did begin to feel that perhaps after all I shouldn't be so worried. I'm saying this has nothing to do with you because I'm not suggesting that you've been challenging me about this, or still less reproaching me, if you see what I mean. It really was a thing in my own mind. I think perhaps the fact that I have considered myself a failure in these interviews has helped me in thinking more about the people that I do really admire.

The reason I agreed to join this program, if that's the right word, is really not because I think that I would have anything very interesting to say, but just because I would be absolutely totally riveted if such a thing had existed a hundred years ago. I would be so utterly absorbed by listening to historians speak about their work. I would just find it so utterly absorbing listening to them, so it seems that if one's a totally minor figure one should collaborate, because it just is so interesting in that way. But I genuinely did begin to feel, in a quite serious way,



that had one been doing interviews of this kind in the nineteenth century, the historians and art historians who would have given you positive answers about the Foucaults and the Derridas of that time would have been the historians and art historians who are of almost no interest to us whatsoever now, paradoxically. And I mean this on both the connoisseur level and what you might call the cultural history level. Burckhardt is my hero, as you know by now, but I think he would have genuinely been very, very baffled by Hegel. Having read [Werner] Kaegi's biography of him, which is nine-volumes long, I know he certainly met people, talked to people, looked at pictures, read in the archives, read novels, but he wasn't at all interested in contemporary art. Burckhardt's views on contemporary art are pathetic in a way, more pathetic than mine, if I dare put it that way, and I'm talking about artists who I would consider really great artists of his time.

So I don't think I ought to feel proud; one should never feel proud of ignorance. I would loathe to be a person who says he doesn't read these things because he just dismisses them all out of hand; that's a terrible kind of arrogance. I do know people—dons and other people at Oxford—who positively boast of never having read contemporary thinkers, or boast of not going to look at modern art and so on; that seems to me deplorable. But I don't feel quite as worried or ashamed about not having read these people, and I don't think it has necessarily





affected my work for the worse. It certainly hasn't for the better, but I don't think it has necessarily for the worst. That's really all I wanted to say, as a kind of credo put in semidefiant and semi-embarrassed terms.

SMITH: No, that's fine. Of course, in some ways, 140 or 150 years ago the equivalent of Foucault would have been [Auguste] Comte.

HASKELL: Yes.

SMITH: And we know that he influenced [John Stuart] Mill of course and [Henry Thomas] Buckle.

HASKELL: It's interesting that you should mention Buckle. I actually find Buckle immensely enjoyable to read. To begin with, I think he writes awfully well; it's just a sheer pleasure reading him, but Buckle is exactly the kind of person I was thinking of. If you had interviewed Buckle he really would be absolutely on a par with everything; I mean he would answer a thousand times better than I can about all these things. Buckle is obviously of interest to historians of thought in the nineteenth century, but I don't think, unless I'm completely wrong, that he's now regarded as a very interesting historian. Anyone interested in nineteenth-century thought has to know about him, obviously, and Isaiah Berlin enjoys pointing out that Buckle is referred to in plays and stories by Turgenev and Chekhov, in which people are liable to say, "Have you read Buckle?" far, far more than, say, John Stuart Mill. Nonetheless, it is



now John Stuart Mill who is very much alive, and who is talked about as a highly controversial and important figure. But Buckle I suspect might have scored more on points, if you see what I mean, than almost anyone.

Another quite good example of what I have in mind is Gibbon. Gibbon clearly was very, very aware of Enlightenment thought and he was aware of Voltaire and everything else, but Gibbon did quite specifically and deliberately and openly reject Voltaire's more abstract and "theoretical" notion of history, and he did say that it's far more important to work on the ancient sources. As far as I know, Voltaire's history of Charles XII is read by people interested in Voltaire, but not by people interested in Sweden. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in historical terms, is a thousand times more important than any historical work written by Voltaire, and it's read by everyone.

Anyone who talks about philosophy and modern thought, and probably modern sociology, must know the major figures, even if one rejects them all. There is an English philosopher, Roger Scruton, who rejects all the Derridas and Foucaults and hates them all, but obviously he has to read them to hate them, if you see what I mean; whereas, in the case of historians and art historians and even cultural historians, I'm not quite sure it's necessary.

SMITH: I had a few questions about your education at Cambridge, and then we'll carry on from there. I was wondering about the role of archival research in



your education. Did you have projects that taught you how to do archival research?

HASKELL: No, really not at all. That is terrible, in a way. Not only that but I didn't have any idea of the kind of basic reference books or guides to how to work in an archive or anything at all. Until I went to the Jesuit archives in Rome, I don't think I ever saw a manuscript source. I knew how to look in libraries, but in archives, absolutely not at all.

SMITH: It was never discussed with your faculty?

HASKELL: Not at all.

SMITH: So the focus of your education, then, was reading great books and thinking about themes and issues.

HASKELL: Yes, very much so. Reading great books and reading books on great books, if you see what I mean. In other words, one was expected to know about interpretations of the historians one read and so on—that, certainly, but actually reading initial sources, no.

SMITH: I am still actually a little unclear about how your interest in art as a historical subject developed.

HASKELL: Well, you're not alone in that because I'm unclear also.

SMITH: You said that you went to talk to Pevsner, and I guess what's puzzling me is what was happening in terms of your interests prior to talking to Pevsner,





and why was it that Pevsner's recommendation would be so life-determining for you?

HASKELL: Well, it was life-determining, you're dead right. I think I mentioned that I had been going to exhibitions. I went to every exhibition I could see, and I read in art, not very widely and certainly not at all deeply—the standard Bernard Berenson and the sort of automatic things one would want to read.

SMITH: Did you read Ruskin?

HASKELL: Yes, but very little. At that time I think Ruskin was still looked upon as a rather cranky Victorian. I probably read a certain amount of Ruskin not so much in connection with art history, but because of English literature. I probably read *Praeterita* before I read any of his works on art. Art does come into *Praeterita*, but I read it basically as a work of literature. But the answer is, my historical interest in art developed because I just enormously liked looking at art. There's a very fine museum at Cambridge itself, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and I used to go there a lot.

SMITH: Did you go to the National Gallery and the Tate?

HASKELL: Yes, and that was just pure pleasure. After my visits I would look up the pictures and that sort of thing.

I was asked to write something especially related to Spain in my



introduction to this Spanish edition of *History and its Images*, and what I was able to say, curiously and luckily enough, was that the very first art book I ever had was a large, very fine book on Velázquez, published by the Phaidon Press and dated 1943. It cost me a pound, and I still have it, so that was a nice thing to be able to say to Spain, and it happens to be true.

SMITH: And you picked this up in a bookshop in London or Cambridge?

HASKELL: It must have been London, I suppose. I can't honestly remember, but it is dated 1943 and I got it then, because I remember having it while I was at school. In those days there was no question of actually being able to see a Velázquez because all the pictures were evacuated and the National Gallery was closed. I remember going to this exhibition of the King's pictures, which was the first exhibition in London after the war. So when you were asking about "object-based" approaches to art history and so on, my work is object-based in the sense that my interest did actually start from the works of art, and my desire to know about them and to know why I did like them, if you see what I mean. And then as a result of that interest I started going to lectures, such lectures as there were, and Nikolaus Pevsner really was the only person who was regularly lecturing on art in Cambridge. I went to all his lectures, and I became more and more interested, and finally I went to see him.

When you say that it was a sort of turning point in my life, or whatever

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phrase you used, that is dead true, and what is also true is I was very, very ill-formed. This once again does make me embarrassed, because I realize how intolerant I would be to any pupil now who would appear before me with no particular idea of what to do. I just liked art. I had no idea of what I wanted to do with it. People do come up to me in this way and I try to be nice to them, but I don't think I would take them on as pupils until they'd got a bit further than that. I'd say, "You really must think a bit." So it is perfectly true that I was ill-formed. King's College told me I must go away, and Pevsner then said, "Why don't you go to Rome and do the Jesuit study?" If Pevsner had said, "Why don't you go to Spain and study the origins of Spanish genre painting?" or something, I might well have taken his advice and gone off to Spain and everything would have been totally different. I can't deny that for a single second. It just happily worked out that I enormously enjoyed what I did have to do. So my wanting to do art history isn't particularly surprising, because it did grow from a genuine love of looking at pictures. The particular form the art history took perhaps is very, very surprising. I suppose if I'd gone to Spain I might have written about Spanish patronage, I don't know.

SMITH: Pevsner was your dissertation adviser?

HASKELL: Yes.

SMITH: How did your other advisers at King's College respond to the idea that





you were going to do an art-historical subject?

HASKELL: Oh, it was marvelous in those days, and I think it probably to some extent still is. Indeed, for what it's worth, I've left something in my will to the college, out of a kind of loyalty and gratitude to them. It was an extremely adventurous thing for them to do, because art history wasn't a subject, so to speak, and that was something of course that only a college could do; the university couldn't have done it. There was one person at King's before me, who I still know, Michael Jaffe, who writes about Rubens. He's five years older than me. King's was, and I hope still is, very, very prepared to support people in every possible way in subjects that they thought were reputable, even if they weren't on any curriculum and didn't necessarily involve any kind of future. No one knew at that stage that art history would flourish, that all of these new universities, like Sussex and East Anglia would come into being, and that they would adopt art history long before Oxford and Cambridge ever did. So on the part of King's it was a kind of risk. They didn't have much to lose by it, except a few hundred pounds a year, but it was a genuinely bold, adventurous thing to do, so I'm deeply, deeply grateful. Everyone was extremely kind and helpful and interested.

Being an art historian still has a kind of . . . how can I put it? If you go to a cocktail party where you don't know anyone, and you're sitting next to



someone who asks, "What do you do?" and you say, "I'm an art historian," instinctively people say, "How very, very interesting. I love art." But if I said I was an engineer, even if I was the greatest engineer in the world and had built the Channel Tunnel single-handedly, you know, there would be a sort of terrible drop in the conversation. That does happen, and I'm aware of that. Art history has got a kind of snob value, if I can put it that way.

SMITH: Did you consider going to the Courtauld?

HASKELL: No. I don't think I ever did, really. Once King's had given me this opportunity there was no particular reason to do so, and then once I got onto this idea of patronage and realized also that I had no gift for connoisseurship, really, it would have been rather pointless to become involved with the Courtauld.

SMITH: I did also want to ask you about some of the seminars you took as a student, and if there were one or two that particularly stand out in your mind as having been examples of good education for you.

HASKELL: It sounds rather paradoxical from lots of points of view, as you'll understand in a minute, and I'm not saying this because you're American, but one of the things I did have to study was American history, and that was taught by a woman—there had been women teaching at Cambridge since the beginning of the century, but they were still rare in those days—who was the wife of a man



who subsequently became extremely famous, not to say perhaps notorious—  
Walt Rostow, the adviser in the Vietnam war.

SMITH: Yes, notorious is the right word.

HASKELL: Yes. Well, at that stage, about 1948 or something, Vietnam was exclusively involving the French. I suppose Rostow himself was a visiting American professor; I can't remember quite why they were there, but his wife taught me. I haven't seen him now for two or three years, but he has been over here and when he does come he usually phones and invites me out to a meal or something. I do remember enjoying his wife's classes very much, and such little American history as I do know certainly does come from her. She did teach, I think, very, very well. I can't remember why I thought she taught well, but I do remember thinking her lectures were good. American history is, as you know, totally, totally removed from anything I've ever done in my own life. I just used to enjoy going to the lectures and I learned quite a lot from them.

And then there were things like history societies—undergraduate societies where people would read each other's papers, and these were not formal in any way; they weren't part of one's education in what you might call an exam sense. I remember enjoying those a lot and taking part and discussing things. I can't actually remember any specific topics that we actually discussed there. A lot of them were sort of half historical and half literary, if I can put it that way.





Then there were the lectures given by this friend of mine, Noel Annan, on English thought in the nineteenth century, and I used to love those and found them extremely fascinating. That again was sort of half way between history and literature, I suppose. Because of those lectures George Eliot was more important to me as a moralist than a novelist, because (as I mentioned before) I resisted the idea of actually reading her. I also found John Stuart Mill and the utilitarians and Darwin enormously fascinating. There must have been others, but as so often, the ideas I formed of them were, so to speak, secondhand. I terribly, terribly enjoyed doing history, so most of the lectures I attended I did genuinely enjoy, but I must admit I can't straight out think of any one particular course that I thought was especially wonderful.

SMITH: In *History and its Images* your argument has much to do with this constant desire to turn images into historical evidence and the resistance that the images themselves give. Does that in any way relate to the kind of historical training you were given?

HASKELL: I suppose it must, to some extent. Again, I find it very, very difficult to work out precisely how. Before I wrote that book I used to get irritated or baffled when people would point to an old building or whatever it might be and say, "This is living history. We can see history here before our very eyes." I kept on wondering what was actually meant by that.



Then also at some stage fairly early on I was perhaps influenced or affected by the new art historians who said that art was elitist, that art was made purely for the rich and the powerful—that kind of anti-art thing, the consequences of which I feel lead to pure philistinism. Undeniably, it is true that art was made for kings and dukes and cardinals and princes and popes, and what you see there is reflecting what they wanted to see. So I suppose at some stage I did begin to wonder if one could accept that evident truth without falling into the philistine trap of rejecting the art.

I remember being affected by a story from the Russian Revolution quite long before I married; in other words, long before I talked about it with my wife. Whether or not this story is actually true, I don't know, but at the time of the Russian Revolution there was a great move to destroy noblemen's palaces, and the commissar at the time—I can't remember if it was Lunacharsky—said, "It's true all these palaces have been built for these terrible princes and we're going to kill off the terrible princes, but, nonetheless, these things were built by your fathers and grandfathers—the Russian people—and it reflects greatly on them and on their fame; therefore, you must preserve it." I remember being rather impressed by the possibility of making a distinction between acknowledging that art was produced for the rich, whom you may be against, and acknowledging the art itself instead of rejecting it.



Now that is not specifically what my book is about, but it is concerned with how you can determine what art is doing and what you can actually learn from art, so to speak. In other words, if you see a happy peasant in a picture by Rubens, I realized quite soon that it's incredibly naive to think that all peasants were tremendously happy and having a very, very jolly time. It was painted for people who didn't want to see starving peasants on their wall. So that was something that did interest me before I ever wrote the book, and it obviously does play a big part in the book.

SMITH: I assume since your involvement with the Warburg was restricted to the use of their library, you did not formally attend any of their seminars.

HASKELL: No. I don't remember them actually having seminars or lectures at all at that time, but I suppose they must have.

SMITH: I think in the early fifties they began having the seminars, from the way I can piece it out.

HASKELL: Well, the answer is, I certainly don't remember going. I think apart from anything else it probably would have been quite difficult for me just in terms of time, because that would have been when I was in the House of Commons and I could only go at odd times of day. Once I got to Cambridge, it wasn't nearly as easy as it is now just to skim off to London for the day for a lecture or a meeting. Then I was more tied down.





SMITH: I did want to ask you a little bit about your relationship with some of the Warburgians, and again I may be throwing out names of people with whom the relationship was very superficial, and that's fine. I'll start off with Rudolf Wittkower.

HASKELL: As I think I probably mentioned to you, he was the first one I met, and you yourself suggested, and I think it probably must have been right, that the meeting must have happened through Nikolaus Pevsner. I can't remember the exact circumstances, but I think that assumption makes much the best sense. In a way, he was the one with whom I was the closest, because at that stage I was working on *Patrons and Painters*, or at any rate the Jesuit part of it, and Wittkower was, after all, the world's leading authority on baroque Rome. He was an immensely attractive, sympathetic, and congenial man to be with, so my relationship with him was the closest. I certainly used to discuss things —"discuss" would be rather boasting because it would suggest that there was give and take, but it was mainly my asking him questions. I remember his monograph on Bernini appeared after I was already working on things, and I could ask him anything about Bernini, or any other baroque artist, and he was extremely helpful and very, very important to me.

SMITH: Was he a friendly sort of person or austere?

HASKELL: Tremendously friendly. Of all the Warburgians he was far and



away the most friendly. Lots of people in America knew him of course because he was at Columbia University. He was the most human, and it sounds like a sort of frivolous thing to say, but he was almost the only one with whom you could actually have a good meal and a bottle of wine. All the others were somehow very against enjoyment, if I can put it in that way.

[Tape VIII, Side Two]

HASKELL: Years and years later, when I was in New York, Millard Meiss was at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and he invited me down to lunch there. I remember eating what was without exception the worst lunch I've ever had in my whole life, anywhere.

SMITH: In Princeton?

HASKELL: In Princeton, at the Institute for Advanced Study. It was much worse than anything I'd had in military service or at public school during the war. This in a way quite pleased me, because it somehow seemed to confirm the theory I had that really very high-minded serious art historians thought it was wrong to enjoy oneself, or to enjoy the pleasures of the table, if I can put it that way. I can't remember exactly what I ate but I remember feeling it was absolutely, totally repulsive. As I say, far from being dismayed by this I think I was quite pleased, because it helped to confirm this theory that I'd already developed from my contact with Warburgians in London. Pevsner's wife Lola



used to do the cooking, and I'm really not trying to be unkind about people who were very hospitable to me and very kind to me, but the food was very dim indeed, and drink was cut down to the barest minimum. Immediately after the war, of course, alcohol was looked upon as a rather extraordinary thing to have in England in any case, but by the fifties you did begin to expect a bottle of wine at dinner almost anywhere. I suppose you just about got it with Pevsner. As I say, this is not meant to be ungrateful for hospitality, but it is just the way it worked. I think Gombrich is rather the same way.

But what I'm trying to get at is that Rudi Wittkower wasn't at all like that. I can't remember any spectacular meals or anything, but somehow the whole feeling was that you were meant to enjoy yourself. And you could gossip. I remember marvelous gossips with Wittkower about my predecessor, Edgar Wind. Wittkower had hair-raising and terribly enjoyable stories of the most spectacular kind about Wind, and it was very, very nice being with him. I felt very much at my ease with him. I didn't feel I was being tested the whole time, if you see what I mean.

SMITH: Even though it falls under the category of folklore, are there any of these Edgar Wind stories that you can remember in sufficient detail that you could repeat them?

HASKELL: Gosh, yes. I could tell you stories that would make your hair stand





on end, but this is the part of the interview that really will be subject to censorship. Apart from anything else, Wind's widow is around Oxford, haunting me; she rang me yesterday evening, in fact. In my "Lives of Art-Historical Widows" she will have top place as the real superterror. [laughter]

Yes, I don't even know where to begin. The whole interview could be taken over by Wind stories. I'm absolutely sure the main story Wittkower told me was true because it's inconceivable that he would make up anything somehow; he wasn't that kind of man. He told me that during the war, when Wind was in America—I think he was then at Smith College—he left part of his library in a flat or house in London. During the London blitz, Wittkower wrote to him in America and said, "Look, we're moving the most important books from the Warburg library to the country because the bombing is going on every night. Would you like us to do the same with your books?" Edgar I suppose cabled back saying, "Yes, deeply grateful; it's wonderful, you're so kind," and everything else. With extreme difficulty they managed to borrow a lorry and they got hold of tea chests to pack books in—large tea chests. The bombs rained down, and the building was ruined, and Wittkower and all these other great scholars like Otto Kurz and no doubt [Fritz] Saxl, were digging in the dust and debris, picking up books. They got them all safely away, and then, at the end of the war, Edgar came to England and the books were all sorted out and one



volume of Arthur Hind's *Early Italian Engraving*, which is composed of six or seven volumes, was missing, and Edgar told Wittkower he was going to take him to court for stealing a copy of his book. This was after everything else had been rescued. I could tell you stories of what he did to me which could also go on for long time.

SMITH: To you here?

HASKELL: Yes, God yes. He denounced me to the university proctors. I was his successor.

SMITH: Right. So he had retired?

HASKELL: He had retired, but lived on in Oxford, as his widow still does, in the same flat. You'll think I must be fantasizing about everything, but really I'm not; somehow you'll have to believe this. He really did do everything he possibly could to make life difficult for me in a most extraordinary way. Some of it was just totally, totally trivial. When new professors arrived at Oxford they were invited out to all the colleges for dinners and everything else, and wherever I went—and it was the same with my wife—people would say, "So sorry to hear that you're hating Oxford and you're having such a miserable time." And we would say, "Actually, we're not hating it at all. We're tremendously enjoying it." Edgar had been telling everyone that we hated it here.

But much, much worse than that was the occasion when Wind telephoned

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud.

2. The second part of the paper describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed discussion of the sampling techniques employed and the statistical tests used to evaluate the results.

3. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study. It shows that there is a significant correlation between the accuracy of the records and the detection of fraud. The results also indicate that the use of statistical methods can help to identify areas where the risk of fraud is highest.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results of the study can be used to develop more effective controls and procedures to reduce the risk of fraud. It also suggests that the results can be used to improve the training of personnel involved in the financial system.

5. The fifth part of the paper concludes the study. It summarizes the main findings and suggests areas for further research. It also expresses the author's appreciation for the assistance of the staff of the Department of Finance.

me and asked if he could speak to me in confidence about a very, very urgent matter. I said of course. Officially we were on excellent terms at that stage. I can't remember if I went round to his flat or met him here, but we talked, and he said, "Francis, I'm terribly sorry. I have to tell you something very, very embarrassing and very painful. When I was out for a walk this afternoon, an undergraduate student came up to me and said, 'Excuse me Professor Wind. Could you please tell me how many lectures a professor's meant to give a year?' I told him a professor's meant to give thirty-six lectures a year, that that was the statutory requirement." The student, according to Wind, said, "Oh, thank you so much Professor Wind. I'm interested to know because your successor, Professor Haskell, isn't doing nearly as many as that." Somehow the idea of a student going up to a professor and saying that was itself almost unthinkable, so I was very, very suspicious and a bit dismayed. Then, about a week or ten days later, I was summoned by what you might call the university police, the proctors; it was a disciplinary kind of thing.

SMITH: These were fellow faculty though?

HASKELL: Yes, well, they weren't of course art history faculty, but they were people like myself, yes. They said, "We're very sorry, Professor Haskell, to mention this; it's deeply embarrassing for us since you're new here and everything else, but we are absolutely required to do this because we've had a

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complaint about you." I asked what complaint that could possibly be because I didn't think I'd done anything wrong, and they said, "The complaint has been that you're not giving the statutory number of lectures you're meant to be giving." Then I must say I did explode. I was on terribly strong ground because before I had come to Oxford, after I had been appointed, I wrote from Cambridge saying I fully accepted all the terms of the appointment, but in my first year it would not be possible for me to give thirty-six lectures because I still had to go on examining at Cambridge and teaching there, and I just couldn't write thirty-six new lectures; it would be impossible. I got a letter back saying, "Of course we understand. No one's going to count your lectures in any case the first year." So when I was summoned about that I did explode. I told them if they looked in the files they would find a letter explaining this, and a letter from the previous proctor saying it didn't matter. I also told them I knew exactly who it was who was denouncing me; it was Wind. There were lots and lots of incidents of that kind that I could mention. I won't mention them all because you'll think I'm paranoid, but I really could go on, and some of it I've got in written form.

He was a very, very extraordinary man. I always use the case of Wind when people talk about Iago and the idea of motiveless malice. They say it can't exist and that was one of Shakespeare's great weaknesses. Shakespeare is



normally so subtle, but Iago represented totally motiveless malice. Some people even say Iago must have been a latent homosexual because motiveless malice can't exist. I just say that Shakespeare knew Edgar Wind, somehow or other.

[laughter]

SMITH: Well, naturally I was going to ask you what his motivation was.

HASKELL: I honestly don't know. The Warburg people are very prejudiced against him, it's perfectly true, but there were some very, very sound reasons for their feelings. Wittkower told me his Wind story long after my own troubles with Wind. It was when I was in America that we were gossiping about Wind, and it was after Wind's death, probably, so it's not just me being completely paranoid.

I find him very difficult to understand. I don't know if you've heard about this, but Wind was a sensational lecturer. He was the most spectacular lecturer I've ever heard, but it was very, very uncanny in a way. Here I am being a bit mad because I know what I'm saying is not true, but it was almost as if he was in touch with a spirit from another world. I was then at Cambridge, with not the foggiest idea that I was ever going to come to Oxford, and because I was already interested in art history, someone at Oxford said, "Would you like to come and hear Edgar Wind's inaugural lecture?" I said I would be fascinated and I'd love to come. I remember it vividly to this day, and after this I heard many



lectures by him, and they all followed more or less the same pattern. You'd hear the clock striking five, he would walk down the aisle, straight ahead, he would go up to the stand, and he would lecture. He never looked at a note. Every sentence was perfectly formed. Absolutely perfect. Because his lectures were very philosophically oriented, he would say things like, "As Plato said in the *Crito*," or, "As Hegel said in his *Aesthetics* . . .," and one would instinctively almost look down *oneself* to see him revert, but he never did. Absolutely not a bit. He would look straight ahead, and at precisely one hour later, to the second, the lecture would come to a perfectly formed close. It really was marvelous, a bit uncanny also. He was, in some ways, the most extraordinary man I've ever met. But this must all be kept dead secret—at any rate until Mrs. Wind's out of the way.

SMITH: This is a question coming from ignorance, but were those to be thirty-six *new* lectures every year?

HASKELL: Well, in theory, yes, but of course in those days that was the case because there was so little art history that was actually taught to undergraduates or to even what we now call the diploma students, so all lectures, in a way, were open lectures. You could repeat but you wouldn't be at all popular if you repeated the same lecture two years running. You could repeat lectures after three or four years, I suppose, when a completely new generation of





undergraduates had appeared. Thirty-six lectures is, as you know, a gigantic task. But once we'd got this art history going to some extent, as part of the history schools with formal seminars and everything else, then I could repeat lectures.

Edgar used to give lectures in the theater, and he had to repeat them because people used to queue up to hear them. He would get the proctors, which is the university police, to see that no one came into his lecture who wasn't wearing a gown. In those days undergraduates had to wear a gown for lectures and he would just have people turned away if they didn't wear one. He could afford to do that because so many people wanted to attend his lectures. People would have worn anything to come, you know. He was a very, very remarkable man.

Jean Seznec had been a friend of Wind's here, and he was very nice to me. He used to invite us to dinner, and it was all perfectly friendly. His second wife, Simone, had been a schoolmistress and she was a very nice person. I used to see them both a bit, and when Seznec died, Simone wanted to give his books to our department, so indeed we've got a lot of them, and she gave some to me. I went round to see her once or twice, and she told me a very, very interesting story which I'd love to know more about. She said when Jean Seznec died Margaret Wind wrote a letter of condolence and then asked if she could come and

1870

1871

1872

see Simone. She came to Simone and said, "There's a letter that my husband wrote to Jean some years ago, and I'd very much like to have that letter back and to burn it." Simone was rather surprised by this, but anyway they did look through his papers, and Margaret did seem to recognize the letter and she took it back and burned it. I would love to hear more about that story. Simone herself is now dead.

SMITH: Did she read the letter?

HASKELL: No, she said she didn't know what it was all about. She might have known about it in the past, but she'd completely forgotten. I think she would have told me because she was very amused by the whole story, but she said she just didn't know. I don't suppose it was anything much.

There's one other story, and then you must stop me because otherwise I could go on for too long. This is really positively the last. It's not an example of terrible malice, it's just funny, I think, and it doesn't even involve me. There was a man, John Sparrow, who was head of All Souls here, who used to venture into art history a bit; he rather liked it. One of the subjects he was interested in was Roman writing and inscriptions, so he wrote a book about inscriptions in art. He was friendly with Edgar, and John himself loved wickedness, so he was rather intrigued by Wind's character, and Edgar gave him lots of advice while he was writing this book.



When John Sparrow's book appeared [*Visible Words: A Study of Inscriptions in and as Books and Works of Art*], the *Times Literary Supplement* sent a copy to Edgar Wind to review, and the reviews were anonymous in those days. Edgar wrote a devastating review of the book, despite the fact that he had been thanked in the preface and had helped John and everything. By one of those coincidences which are I suppose about once in a million—the sort of thing one dreads ever happening in one's own life—the proofs of the review, instead of being sent to Edgar to correct, were put in an envelope and sent to John Sparrow himself. Some secretary got it wrong. So John Sparrow read the review in advance and of course he knew exactly who'd written it—he probably could have guessed, in any case. So this devastating review appeared, and John Sparrow wrote an absolutely marvelous letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in which he said something like, "Sir, I am deeply grateful for the *Times Literary Supplement* devoting so much space to my humble book." He always used to speak like that. "It's very gratifying that someone who is obviously an extraordinary authority on the subject has taken so much trouble in discussing it. There are one or two things that puzzle me about your reviewer's comments. He (or could it perhaps be she?) says that. . . And every time he (or could it perhaps be she?), " and so on. It ended more or less with, "However, despite the very critical notice I've received in your pages, I must say that I'm not as





dismayed by this as I might normally be by a hostile review, because in writing this book I did have the absolute consistent help of a man who everyone would agree is a great authority on this subject: Edgar Wind." [laughter] I kept a copy of the letter. So there's a comic Wind story.

SMITH: What was the Wind reputation before you came here, as far as you knew?

HASKELL: Well, one aspect of his reputation—and this was of course terrifying for me and had nothing to do with his character—was just the sheer brilliance of his lectures. But he refused to teach people. He could have, at that stage, if he'd wanted to, because those were the boom years of the university and he could have expanded the program and got extra people, but he didn't. He didn't want to make it into a teaching department at all. Perhaps he was right, in a way, in view of the fact that there'd never been any art history in Oxford, because he did make it an intensely glamorous subject, if I can put it that way, in the sense of giving these electrifying lectures. I'm very, very critical of the lectures I heard, but that doesn't really matter; he did make lots of people very, very excited about art history. So that was one thing, and it was made clear to me—how right they were to make it clear to me—how terribly difficult it was going to be to follow him. One of the reasons I did therefore pursue a rather different policy was that I knew it was absolutely no good even trying to compete in that way.



Then there was the other side of his reputation. When I came here there was a trail of blood and tears of people who had been wounded and shattered by him, people who had never dared to come into the department, who had been driven out. Wind had terrible rows with the Ashmolean; one heard endless stories about that, so he was a sensational lecturer and enjoyed success with undergraduates in that way, but he was a terrible person to have any dealings with.

SMITH: So do you think that part of the recruitment of you was to correct some of the problems?

HASKELL: Yes, I think that to some extent was true in the sense that people did say to me when I first came, "Whatever else happens, we hope you will try to integrate more with the history department and other faculty, and it's very important to get on with the Ashmolean if you can, and discuss things with them." There was a certain amount of repairing of bridges which I was asked to do, and I very happily did do.

SMITH: That strikes me as being equally important to art history having a real presence in the university as the spectacular lectures.

HASKELL: Well, obviously I hope so. We were talking yesterday about pupils and I've brought a list here just because I couldn't remember anything. I had a lot of research students and I don't think Edgar had a single one. He just really

*[The text on this page is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a multi-paragraph document with several lines of text per paragraph. The content is not discernible.]*

didn't believe in that sort of thing. He used to give little classes. A friend of mine told me about them. At the first class Wind would begin by saying, "I'm sure you've read the *Republic*, Hegel's *Aesthetics*, and Kant," and these were undergraduates. There would be a wall of silence and someone would say, "I have been meaning to get around to it but I haven't read them." And Wind would say, "What? You haven't read them? Well, there's no point in coming to my class if you haven't read them." It was a marvelous way, I must say, of getting out of teaching. I've always been tempted to do it because it just meant he had no students and he didn't have to bother with them. [laughter]

SMITH: Of course they were supposed to have read all of this at Eton or wherever.

HASKELL: Well, yes, but not quite in the way Wind meant. Stuart Hampshire, who is a friend of mine in America, used to describe giving joint lectures and classes with Wind on aesthetics rather than art history, which I'm sure were very, very brilliant. One thing I'm not saying about Wind is that he wasn't a brilliant man, but he was very, very perverse and a thoroughly evil man. My colleague, who's retired now, Howard Colvin, has told me that he thinks Wind's the only actually evil man he's ever met in his life, and I think I share the same feeling. But he was a very brilliant man as well; there's no question about that, and a marvelous speaker. He also had enormous charm, if he wanted—terrific charm.





SMITH: But, nonetheless, in terms of British art history, one thinks of Wittkower and Gombrich as having much more influence.

HASKELL: Absolutely. I'll tell you where Wind had enormous influence, and I think Gombrich and Wittkower wouldn't like this to be said, but I'm absolutely certain it was true, was entirely outside the field of art history—rather paradoxically, I remember, in things like theatrical productions. Quite often you find a bit quoted from his book *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, and people loved the idea of that. He was recognized in the world of culture outside the world of art history. I think Gombrich has now rapidly overtaken him, but that has been since *Art and Illusion*.

SMITH: It was about the same time.

HASKELL: It was about the same time, yes. At that time I think Wind was much more recognized in that way, but not in terms of art history. I think in art history he was never taken as seriously as Gombrich. I think that's one of the problems Mrs. Wind's finding with his papers on Raphael, or Michelangelo, because, in a way, now they look terribly out of key with all the developments that have happened in the field since.

SMITH: Otto Kurz seems to be somebody else that you had a good relationship with.

HASKELL: I hope so, yes. I terrifically liked and admired him, and we always



got on very well. I didn't know him very well. I remember in the Apostles we used to discuss what it actually meant to "know someone well," you know; that was the kind of thing we used to talk about. One requirement was to have had a meal at their house. There were various grades of knowing someone. Anyway, on that account I certainly didn't know Kurz well because I never did have a meal at his house, though he did have meals in our house—not because of any special reason except that he used to come down and give these lectures and I used to invite him to meals afterwards. He was absolutely delightful, but in an enormously diffident way. If you saw him in the corridor of the Warburg he would start to retreat, almost as if he was a dog you might have wanted to hit. He was a very, very shy, quiet and diffident man, but absolutely delightful and totally omniscient. He really did know everything.

I don't know if you've heard the remark Gombrich made at Kurz's retirement party at the Warburg, but I think it's a very delightful story and it's rather surprising for Gombrich. Gombrich said, "An enormous amount has now been written about the Warburg and the Warburgian method, the Warburgian school of art history, and everything else, and tonight I'm just going to let you in on a secret—the one thing about it that hasn't been said. I'll tell you exactly what the Warburgian method is; it consists of saying, 'Ask Kurz.'" It's a rather charming story, and a very modest one, coming from Gombrich, and in some



way it's true. You could ask Kurz almost anything about ideas, about art, about Oriental art, about almost anything. He was a very, very impressive man. With Kurz you got the feeling you were with a dedicated scholar, you know, not a show-off. And he had a great sense of humor; he was very, very witty. I could quote lots and lots of jokes of his.

SMITH: What about Leopold Ettlinger?

HASKELL: Yes, I knew him probably better than any of them, actually, in a different way. I had slightly stormy relations with him, but in a way, we got on very well. I probably knew him the best, certainly if "knowing" means having meals in his house and him having meals in my house and so on, but he was always a bit the odd man out. He was always looked upon as a bit of a joke by all of them. They were all rather condescending about him, and it's true he really wasn't on their level at all, intellectually or otherwise. He wasn't a genius by any stretch of the imagination, but I suppose partly because of that one didn't feel that one was always having to measure up to him. The main reason I knew him well was because Gombrich had been professor at London University and when Gombrich gave that up Ettlinger replaced him, and I at that stage had been chosen by Gombrich to give art history lectures to art students at the Slade School of Art, which was the first and last time I've ever actually taught artists. And of course it was a very, very interesting and difficult thing to do, but I





rather enjoyed it. That's the time when I did come in touch with modern art in the sense of modern art students. Some of the artists have gone on to be quite well known.

At any rate, Ettlinger, to that extent, was my boss, and I used to see a lot of him then, and he did become very, very bossy. He had terrible misfortune with his wives; one wife committed suicide, one wife became a lesbian, and that caused him misery and she suffered misery herself. I had a theory that one of his wives was constantly saying, "Be a man, Le." She used to call him Le, for Leopold. There's this great story about George III's mother. I suppose it was one of the reasons the American colonies were lost. Apparently when he became king his mother kept saying, "Be a king, George, be a king." I kept on imagining the Mrs. Ettlinger in question saying, "Be a professor, Le, be a professor. Assert yourself more." He began to be awfully difficult. Instead of the lectures I wanted to give he told me what I ought to be doing and so on, and then I resigned as a result and we had a bit of a row. But after that I saw him and we got on perfectly, perfectly well.

SMITH: Did you know Buchthal?

HASKELL: No, I mean only to smile at, but no more than that, no.

SMITH: Did you know Margot Wittkower?

HASKELL: Yes, but really in New York rather than in London. I suppose I

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2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1801. It contains a statement of the public debt and the state of the finances of the United States.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 3, 1801. It contains a statement of the state of the Navy and the progress of the construction of new ships.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1801. It contains a statement of the state of the Army and the progress of the construction of new forts.

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must have seen her in London, but it was mainly in New York, where I especially remember one evening with them. They used to live near Riverside Drive, 120th Street or something like that. I remember going to dinner with them, and almost the whole evening was spent talking about how dangerous it was to go out after sunset and how people were always being mugged, particularly in that part of New York, and what the chances were of surviving ten minutes if you went out and so on. At about half past eleven at night or whatever it was, after a very nice dinner—it was very jolly because they were very, very nice and Margot was very friendly to us—I said, "Well, we really must get back to our hotel. Could you possibly ring for a taxi?" I think it was Margot who said, "Oh, don't bother. If you just walk three blocks down the street you'll find dozens of them." This was after having terrified us with stories the whole evening. [laughter] But I liked her very much.

SMITH: One of Rudolf Wittkower's most influential books was *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. Of course it was primarily architects who were interested in it, but was that a meaningful book to you?

HASKELL: Yes, it was meaningful in its unconventional and challenging approach to the whole idea of the circle. Nikolaus Pevsner said that the circle was love of pure form for its own sake and so on, and Wittkower was saying the opposite. In that way it was a very exciting book. All the things about musical



harmonies and things architectural didn't register very much with me. But in that way only I think Wittkower was like Wind—in the sense that he moved beyond the art historians, although in his case the art historians also were deeply, deeply interested in what he was saying. He had actually influenced modern creative architecture.

SMITH: One of the things that has come up in interviews with people who were his students was the way in which that book and Wittkower's work in general provided a source of spiritual conviction, which I find a kind of interesting phrase to apply to scholarly work. Does that make sense to you?

HASKELL: Well, it makes sense in one way, but I don't know if this is what is generally meant. One of the reasons that I think his Pelican book on Italian art and architecture is wonderful is that architects such as Borromini are not just looked upon as strange eccentrics and possibly eccentrics of genius, but as people with tremendous convictions, doing something for spiritual reasons. In other words, they do have to be taken very seriously as creative artists with real spiritual convictions, or certainly moral beliefs, and in the reading that I'd come across before, they hadn't ever been treated in that way. By the time I came into art history Borromini wasn't just looked upon as a sort of wicked joke as he had been before; he was looked upon as a kind of eccentric genius. I think Rudi Wittkower made one feel that Roman baroque did have a serious moral basis





behind it. If that's what you meant then I entirely do understand.

SMITH: I think that's part of what I meant, but also a more contemporary sense of spiritual conviction.

HASKELL: You know, I'm certainly not denying it, but I don't think it would be the first thing that would come to my mind. I'm delighted people do feel that because I think he was a wonderful man, but I must admit it's not something that I would have thought of myself.

SMITH: That scholarship could put one in touch with the sources of awe that one feels and mobilize them?

HASKELL: Once you say it that way, I can easily see it and could probably respond, but I can't pretend that I would have just said that spontaneously myself.

SMITH: This is switching somewhat—actually more than somewhat. In the mid-sixties, John Summerson headed the royal commission on art education and I wondered to what degree you were involved in those discussions and to what degree they might have influenced teaching. I think you were then at Cambridge, probably.

HASKELL: No, I doubt if I was aware of it then; that really didn't come into my life one bit.

SMITH: Okay, fine. This is possibly a very large question, but would you say that your training was historicist?



HASKELL: It's a word that has been given so many different kinds of meaning. I wonder if you could just be a bit more precise?

SMITH: Well, historicism as opposed to an interest in searching for universals?

HASKELL: Then I suppose the answer is yes, to the extent you would say that someone like Gombrich, for instance, is antihistoric. He's searching for universals, wouldn't you say?

SMITH: Right. Was this something that was talked about during your education?

HASKELL: I suppose it must have been, in discussions we used to have. I imagine it's true, isn't it, that this is a kind of generational thing isn't it? I would tend to feel that most people of my age and younger probably are historicist and people of Gombrich's age and older are universalists. I may be taking this question in much too simplified a form, but I suppose if I was led into a room and some people were old and some people were young and I was asked on a terrible television quiz show or something to pick out the historicists and the universalists I would do it based on age.

SMITH: You would. Okay.

HASKELL: Don't you think that's right?

SMITH: Well, I'm wondering to what degree we're talking about a specifically British tradition, because there's a way of looking at art history in which its



formation as a discipline involves taking the object out of its historical context and therefore art history becomes antihistoricist in its very formation.

HASKELL: I wonder if that is true about art history. It's certainly true about art historians. You could say it's true of Ruskin or even, if you want, of Walter Pater, although those traditions are not the same, but neither of them are really art historians. To that extent I would say it's also probably true—strange as it may seem—of someone like Roger Fry, but he also is not an art historian. These people were all great writers on art, and I don't know quite what you'd call them really, but they're not exactly art historians.

SMITH: I'm actually thinking of someone like Alois Riegl, and the *Kunstwollen*.

HASKELL: Yes, that is perfectly true. This sounds like an absolutely idiotic thing to say, but I wonder if one would now think even of Riegl as an art historian . . . well, no, one would have to call him an art historian.

[Tape IX, Side One]

SMITH: You were saying that nowadays there are few people writing truly Riegl-based art history.

HASKELL: Yes. All the people I think of—and curiously enough I would include Gombrich in this, although he'd be very surprised and not too pleased to find himself here—are all people for whom art is a kind of substitute for religion. Gombrich obviously does believe in the eternal values of a hierarchy of artists, so





to speak, which is almost a religious notion of art. And so did Ruskin, so did Pater, so did Fry, and, in a way, so did Riegl. And I don't think there are many people who do feel this way. There are many people who'd like to. I suppose if I was thinking in these rather melodramatic terms, *Rediscoveries in Art* might be looked upon as the kind of book that Victorian clergymen who lost their faith wrote. [laughter] Do you know what I mean? These clergymen who began to have doubts. They feature so often in Victorian novels. To that extent it could be seen as an historicist book, but an historicist book written rather with regrets and with tears, if you see what I mean. As I say, this is putting it much, much too melodramatically.

SMITH: I ask this partly because I wonder if the unique position that you have occupied within art history, or the isolation motif that you've stressed over the last two days reflects, in a sense, an aspect of bringing into art history a deeply historicizing perspective, which runs against the grain of the discipline as it has developed over the last century. And yet, in *History and its Images* the object remains ultimately unknowable, which is certainly an art-historical perspective, but as you accept that inner mystery you then nonetheless put the objects back into history clearly and firmly; they have no existence except within history.

HASKELL: To be honest with you I've never put myself in the position of working this out for myself, but I'm not denying it. It sounds rather silly to say I

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It also provides a brief overview of the literature review and the methodology used in the study.

2. The second part of the paper presents the results of the study. It includes a detailed analysis of the data collected and the findings of the research. The results are presented in a clear and concise manner, with appropriate use of tables and figures.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the implications of the study and the conclusions drawn from the research. It also provides a brief summary of the key findings and the recommendations for future research.

4. The fourth part of the paper is a conclusion, which summarizes the main points of the paper and provides a final statement on the importance of the study.

have to think longer about myself, but I mean it's perfectly possible; I hadn't quite thought of it in this way, but what you're saying sounds perfectly possible.

SMITH: Well, I don't want to pursue it too much further then. Part of what I'm interested in is the degree to which you may have participated either at Cambridge or at Oxford in these kinds of discussions about the nature of history, or the past.

HASKELL: I think we must have. Again, partly this is just due to a bad memory, but I'm sure this is the kind of thing we did talk about.

SMITH: It struck me how quickly you responded when I mentioned Namier's name. So, clearly, that was a name that had had a depth of resonance.

HASKELL: It had enormous resonance. As I mentioned to you earlier, I've a disturbing feeling that I knew more about Namier from what people had said about him in lectures and in conversation than from a very sound knowledge of what he actually wrote himself. I've an awful feeling that a lot of my education has been formed in that way. But what I totally agree with is that the work of Namier did have enormous resonance for me, even if the one thing I would dread more than anything would be someone giving me an examination on the writings of Namier, because I couldn't do it.

SMITH: Was [R. G.] Collingwood someone who was discussed?

HASKELL: No, I wouldn't say so, no. I certainly didn't read him. When I



was in Italy we used to talk about Croce a lot and Collingwood was always referred to as a sort of Crocean, and I knew a man in England, Cecil Sprigge, who had translated a lot of Croce and had known Collingwood. In other words, it was really very, very much secondhand knowledge, as it were.

SMITH: The nineteenth-century history you mentioned earlier today was quite important, and when I threw out the name Buckle—

HASKELL: Buckle, to be honest, I only read very recently, and I didn't read the complete volumes. Of course I knew about Buckle and again I imagine that in those lectures Noel Annan gave on nineteenth-century thought Buckle must have been discussed. Buckle was certainly part of my consciousness, but I didn't read him extensively until I was writing *History and Its Images* because I thought he might have interesting things to say. In fact, I found he didn't have terribly much to say that was of interest to me, but that was the first time I really read Buckle.

SMITH: One of the themes we've been looking at, although I haven't explicated it or stated it precisely, is the way educational structures and historical approaches interact, and certainly England has gone through an educational transformation during your career.

HASKELL: Yes, but, you see, to some extent it passed me by, in the sense that I am a product of the ancien regime, if you see what I mean.





SMITH: Exactly. But you teach in the new regime.

HASKELL: In the new regime, yes absolutely. I'm someone sort of left over.

SMITH: I find the new regime puzzling sometimes, with its echoes of the old regime and its echoes of American system and its echoes of Continental systems; has that affected the way in which the scholars at Oxford or Cambridge do their work, the way classes are structured, or student-teacher relationships?

HASKELL: Well, you know, Oxford still is sort of defiantly clinging on to aspects of the old system. Individual supervision, in which you just see one person at a time or at most two, is looked upon generally now as very exceptional and a complete anomaly, but it does still exist in Oxford. I see my pupils individually to discuss their work. I'll sit with one or two pupils, we'll put photographs on the table and discuss things.

Quite often in these sessions we've been having, and in general, what one doesn't quite know is whether one is doing something because it is part of what one thinks is a good idea, or because it is part of a general rule. For instance, I believe much more in seminars than in lectures, and I think that, you could say, is part of something that is changing, generally. I don't know to what extent that is an American phenomenon, but since I came to Oxford, and certainly when I was at Cambridge, there was the individual supervision, but otherwise all instruction was through public lectures, and that has changed, and the number



attending public lectures has gone down; there are far more seminars.

SMITH: But if I understand correctly, the British seminar system is somewhat different from the American seminar system in the sense that the faculty person remains the primary person talking as opposed to the students?

HASKELL: Well, in the seminars I give, at any rate, the students are very much given a free hand. Now you have to fill in these self appraisals and all the rest of it, but what I do is I arrange that each week a student will prepare a paper, and in the undergraduate seminars I usually ask them to read the paper and I try and act more or less as chairman while everyone else talks. It varies enormously from year to year, following no trend whatsoever, as far as I can make out. Some years I get extremely good, lively classes and everyone joins in and talks, and some years I get an absolutely dead silent class and then it does result in me just giving a kind of mini lecture, occasionally saying, "What do you think about this, Peter?" and that sort of thing, but it varies enormously.

With the graduate seminars, the same thing happens to the extent that I ask them to prepare a paper, but instead of reading it in class I ask them to photocopy it a day before class and distribute it to the other students, so we've all had time to read it. Then I just ask everyone what they thought, and there are no holds barred. They must say what they think.

SMITH: How large are your seminars?



HASKELL: Never more than six or seven at the most, if I can possibly help it. This next year, which is going to be my last year, I see that there are eight people applying to do a seminar, and in previous years I probably would have split them up into two classes of four, but since I'm leaving, I won't do that this time.

SMITH: Would these research seminar papers be rather intensive?

HASKELL: Well, this depends. The research student papers are done for people doing what we call the Diploma, which is halfway between an undergraduate B.A. course and a higher-degree course. And they have to cover certain ground. The course I run is called French Art and Art Criticism In the Nineteenth Century, hence we have this huge collection of French nineteenth-century art criticism texts. I tell them in the beginning, as long as they cover the necessary ground in their own time and with me, I am more than pleased if in the classes they choose to read papers on things that they're particularly interested in. I tell them I'm not going to take any blame if at the end they have an exam paper and they say, "Well, this question's not fair because we never discussed it in class," or something. I'll tell them that's not what we're aiming to do here. They're more than welcome to do what they're interested in, but it would only be fair, on the whole, if it's not so narrow that other people will have to spend about fortnight just reading about it. But otherwise I give them very, very much a free





hand.

SMITH: Would it be fair to say that in 1950 the primary intellectual community of a British academic would be educated people in Britain?

HASKELL: The people who would read one's books?

SMITH: Right, the people whose opinions you would be concerned about.

HASKELL: In 1950 I should think so, yes.

SMITH: Would you say that now that readership has become internationalized?

HASKELL: In my field, enormously so. When one's writing something one inevitably always turns back to it in conversation, but this again crops up in this Spanish preface I'm working on. I suddenly got panicky that it might sound rather condescending, although it wasn't meant to be. When I drafted it last night, after you left, what I was saying was, like everyone else who's been to Spain in recent years, I've been enormously impressed with the new vitality and that's one of the reasons why I'm glad my book is appearing in Spanish. I feel much more apprehensive about the response to the book in Spain than I might have thirty years ago. I won't say that it wouldn't have mattered, but the truth is I wouldn't terribly have minded, whereas I think now I would really want to be appreciated in Spain, if you see what I mean. I've got to express it in some way that doesn't sound condescending. I hope it doesn't, because it's meant to be a sort of recognition of exactly what you're saying. Certainly the same applies in



France and elsewhere.

SMITH: This may be an imponderable and therefore unanswerable question, but I wonder about how the conceptualization of a book changes when you start thinking, "Well, besides my British audience I have of course my American readers, but I also have my French, my Italian, my German, and now my Spanish readers."

HASKELL: I am to some extent conscious of that, but whether that is a result of the change you're talking about or not I'm not quite sure. I am extremely conscious, in my own books, of trying to cover whole areas of Europe. *Patrons and Painters* did have sections on France, Germany and Spain. In writing *History and Its Images* I was very self-consciously aware of taking examples from different countries. There were cases where I could have used an example of some historian from England, but I deliberately used one from Germany or France, or even America, just because I was very keen to show this was a wide problem. And I feel a bit sorry in a way that I didn't use more examples from Spain, but I just didn't know enough about Spanish historians to do so. But certainly I was very conscious in that way. It wasn't because I hoped to sell the book in those countries, but it was just that I was frightfully keen to be international in that way.

SMITH: But it did mean conceptualizing historiography as an international

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science, whereas one could with equal justification say, "No, there's British historiography and British historians, particularly in the time that you're dealing with, are more concerned with their own tradition than with what the Germans or the French are writing, even though they may be aware of that."

HASKELL: Yes, but that is going to be there whatever I do. I know perfectly well that everyone will say that my approach is a British empirical approach. I can write half the reviews of my book in advance, as it were, both the favorable and the unfavorable ones. [laughter]

I can vary my approach to include different kinds of attitudes to art from different countries and people brought up under different traditions and everything else, but one thing I don't think I can do, nor do I think to be honest I should do, would be to try and change the whole way of visualizing history to bring it into a more international context. I think that would be wicked. That's too strong a word, but I do think it would be wrong.

SMITH: You've been involved with two museums. Another issue we've been looking at is the way in which changes in academia have affected the ways in which museums have functioned, or perhaps it's the other way around. At least in America, it's been more the university to the museum, because we could say thirty years ago very few museum personnel had advanced degrees and now they all do.

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HASKELL: Yes, this is happening more and more in England. My close friend, Nicholas Penny, was an academic and he is now in the National Gallery in London, and he might yet come back again to be an academic one day. So this happens, but it's not very frequent. I can think of one or two other cases, but it's not very frequent. What you're absolutely dead right about is that the overwhelming majority of museum people are now expected to have academic degrees. It is one of the things that has changed radically since I was young. It would have been very, very peculiar for a museum person to have a degree then. To be honest, it was the same in the university. I may say straight out that I haven't got a Ph.D. Here I am, at the end of my career and a professor, and I have done tolerably well and all the rest of it, but I haven't got a higher degree. It was never expected of me and I never got it.

SMITH: But *Patrons and Painters* is surely the equivalent of a higher degree.

HASKELL: Well, I'd prefer to have written *Patrons and Painters* to have got a higher degree, if you ask me to show off about it, yes, but now, my successor, whoever that's going to be, will have a higher degree and probably wouldn't even dare to apply for the job if he or she didn't. So that has changed radically. And I agree with you that that would apply to museums—not completely, but to quite a large extent.

SMITH: The two museums with which you're involved are the Wallace



Collection and the Ashmolean. We've talked about the Ashmolean, but what about the Wallace Collection?

HASKELL: Well, the Wallace Collection is different from 99 percent of all museums in that it is a closed museum and it's not allowed to acquire or borrow anything, so the problems it poses are in one way completely different from other museums. In another way the problems are identical to other museums because they're all concerned with money, as is everyone now. And, as I touched on yesterday, they're also enormously concerned whether enough people are coming into the museum. One of the things a lot of people I know from abroad rather like about the Wallace Collection is that it's not crowded and they can wander around and see things very easily. I am partly delighted and partly I cringe, because I know that one of our jobs is to attract more visitors. I've just written the introduction to a catalog for the current exhibition now, for which I've been partly responsible. We're allowed to do exhibitions as long as they consist of things already in the museum. This exhibit is built around the collection of Anatole Demidoff, who was a great Russian collector, who lived in Paris. It opened two or three weeks ago. So we can do that; but even that exhibit is a completely new start, and it's a bit of a gimmick in the hope that it'll bring more people in. Even though we don't need money for buying objects, we do need it for paying the custodians and so on.

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SMITH: Is the collection larger than the exhibition space, so that materials have to be rotated?

HASKELL: No, not really. What I ought to say about that actually, which perhaps is important, is that I was surprised to be appointed a trustee, but also terribly, terribly pleased because that is almost the only place, really, where I am directly involved with the works of art themselves. So although we don't buy, we do have to make policy decisions about cleaning the works of art, for instance, which pieces should or should not be cleaned, and what risks there are. Now of course it's the experts who do it and of course one takes expert advice, but the ultimate decision has to be taken by us, the trustees. Let me give you one example. There's one picture in the Wallace Collection by Claude Lorrain in which there's a shepherd sitting there with a little dog, and when they started testing on it they found out that the dog had been added to the picture. It was certainly not painted by Claude, and it was probably added in the eighteenth century. That's the kind of situation where we had to have a long discussion, which I terribly enjoyed and found fascinating. Should the dog be removed or should it stay? I said it must stay because I believe in doing the minimum possible. The only reason I'm mentioning that example, and there are many others of its kind, is because that is the one chance I have of not being an academic art historian, but of being specifically involved in the works of art. At





every meeting we go around and look at galleries and decide, you know, if the lighting is good enough and if the hanging is right and whether a picture should be moved from here to there, and that is enormously good for me. I don't know if I'm good at it, but it's enormously good for me, and it matters tremendously that I do it; I'm terribly, terribly pleased about that.

SMITH: How often are you called upon by museums, either here in Britain or in America or on the Continent to give advice?

HASKELL: On purchases?

SMITH: Well, let's start with purchases.

HASKELL: Not much, as you'll guess when I hesitate. I'm trying to think of the last time. It's almost never in an official capacity, but the Louvre, when they've considered buying some picture by an English painter, have asked me if I thought it would be a good idea.

I am on two other boards which are involved in precisely this topic, and those are also sources of enormous pleasure to me. I'm not quite clear how much longer I will remain on these boards, but it was fairly recently that I joined, since my last book came out. One is called the Export Reviewing Committee, in which we decide whether we should recommend that a work should be held in England while some institution tries to raise the money to buy it, and the other group is called the National Art Collections Fund, to which

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museums apply to us to give them money for purchases—we are a voluntary charity—and in both of those cases the pictures or sculptures or sometimes porcelain or silver actually come to us and we all have to look at them and make decisions. There's a committee, so there are several of us there, but to that extent I suppose I do play quite a significant role in what museums do get, and that is immensely important to me, psychologically.

SMITH: What about doing essays for catalogs, and involvement in planning special exhibitions?

HASKELL: Yes, that I have been involved a bit. I've been on committees of lots of exhibitions, but I've been getting out of them recently. I wrote an article in the *New York Review of Books* about a year or two ago, I don't know if you saw it, which caused rather an uproar and got me into terrible trouble with Washington and with Carter Brown, who was then director of the National Gallery of Art. I very strongly denounced an exhibition in which they'd been involved, in a way, by implication, because I was criticizing a type of exhibition which I think is happening a lot now, and this article did have quite wide resonance and it was copied in various Continental and American papers. Since that happened I've felt slightly embarrassed about serving on committees for arranging exhibitions because it's like those American television preachers who are then caught in brothels afterwards, if you know what I mean. [laughter] If



I've said the whole thing's wrong and I suddenly find myself on a committee, I feel slightly embarrassed. I'm not too upset about this because I was only denouncing a certain kind of exhibition, and I hope I wouldn't be involved in that, but, nonetheless, it has created a certain sort of anxiety. I've been involved less and less in exhibitions in that way.

SMITH: You are affiliated with Trinity College here. Is that of particular significance?

HASKELL: No. This is an awful thing to say, but it's of almost no significance. The reason for this is terribly straightforward, I think. It's not because I dislike it or anything else. The reason is almost entirely a technical one. I just find that if I'm going to keep up life as a scholar, so to speak, by which I mean writing and so on, and do my teaching properly, and carry on administration, of which there is a great deal, and see my wife and live a normal home life, something has to go by the board, and I decided quite early on when I came here I just couldn't manage college life on top of all that. Before I came here I had been a bachelor in King's for about twenty years and lived rather an active college life.

SMITH: You lived in the college?

HASKELL: I lived in the college, saw people, and ate in the college every night, unless I was invited out to dinner. Here, I don't even have rooms in the





college. I still do look upon King's as my spiritual home. King's gave me an honorary degree and so on. I've mentioned it to you so often by now that you're getting bored with it, but it really was an important place for me. Then I came to Trinity, and it was like a completely different world. I didn't know anyone and when we came here my wife hadn't been in England at all long and the idea of leaving her every day and going out to dinner, or whatever it might be, at the college was unthinkable. I've now reached such a terrible stage that I don't know the names of three-quarters of my colleagues among the fellows in the college, so I daren't go there because I'd find myself sitting next to them and I wouldn't be able to say, "Well, what do you do?" because I'd find it was some person who's been at the college for the last fifteen years and who's just won the Nobel Prize for physics or something.

SMITH: So there's no obligatory monthly lunch or something?

HASKELL: Well, I'm sure I'm looked upon as a thoroughly bad person, as it were; it's not obligatory, but I think I've gone beyond the code of decency. I do go in from time to time, and I go to college meetings when I can. I go to about two lunches a week. So I do appear there occasionally, but I never bring in guests for dinner and that's what you're hoped to do and so on. In normal circumstances I might easily have taken you in to dinner at the college and that was probably, for all I know, what you were expecting and hoping for, but I can



just guarantee it's the one thing that won't be happening to you, not because I don't want to invite you to the college, but I wouldn't dare introduce you because I wouldn't know the names of my own colleagues and it would be too embarrassing; it's as simple as that. [laughter]

SMITH: That's fine. Do you still have connections at King's College?

HASKELL: They gave me a great honor and enormous personal pleasure by giving me an honorary degree, which means that I am invited to college celebrations and feasts, and one thing and another. I do go, but not as often as I should, for three reasons. First, there are fewer and fewer people I know there, frankly; most of the people are not necessarily dead, but they've moved on or retired. Second, and this may sound silly, it's not terribly convenient and easy to get there; it's a very exhausting journey because we don't drive. Third, a couple of years ago I was thought to be very seriously ill—I wasn't, but it was then seen as quite serious—and somehow that slightly broke off connections, but later this term I will be going down again to dinner at King's and I remain sentimentally attached to it.

SMITH: Yesterday you talked about the Apostles, and that seemed to have been an important part of your life, that kind of intellectual and personal exchange. Since you've come to Oxford, is there anything that's equivalent to that? Does that continue to be part of your life in some way? Obviously not necessarily the



Apostles, but that sort of connection?

HASKELL: No, I very, very much wish there was something like that. It doesn't really count because it doesn't have what you might call the "high moral seriousness" of the Apostles, but I belong to one or two lunch and dining clubs where I meet congenial people who belong, if I dare say it, to my world. By that I don't mean art historians, but I do mean to some extent publishers, or intellectuals. I suppose otherwise the nearest I do have to the Apostles is seeing someone like Nicholas Penny, whom I do see a lot of. He is a great friend and we do genuinely talk about our work and so on.

SMITH: So the Apostles experience sounds like it's been transferred onto an individual-based relationship?

HASKELL: Yes, I think that would be an absolutely correct thing to say.

SMITH: Do things like the Apostles continue to exist?

HASKELL: Yes they do, as far as I know. I haven't been myself. Today is Sunday, and if I could get to Cambridge in time I suppose I could still sit there and join them.

SMITH: So they still meet there?

HASKELL: Yes, unless something has gone wrong. In theory I could dive into a taxi now and go to Cambridge and sit there. Nothing in the world would induce me to do so, but I could.





SMITH: I did want to ask you about a few people I think you know here in Oxford. They may be elsewhere now, actually; it's just that you made the connection with them while you were here. What about Hugh Honour?

HASKELL: I just had lunch with Hugh before I met with you today. He's not at Oxford now; he lives in Italy, permanently. He just happens to be in England for a week and he is staying in a tiny flat, a *pied-à-terre*, that we have in London. He lives with John Fleming. They've lived together all the time I've known them, which has been more than forty years.

SMITH: Are they Cambridge people?

HASKELL: Yes. John is about ten years older than me, Hugh is only one year older, and we were at Cambridge together but we never met there. Basically I got to know them afterwards. They're the most stable couple, male or female, homosexual or heterosexual, I've ever met; they've been together close to fifty years. They lived in Italy and I met them and they invited me to come and spend the weekend with them once when I was in Venice; in those days they lived in Asola. They are terrific gossips and know everything, so we gossip away like anything, but also we talk about work. They usually show me things they've written and they ask my opinion. Larissa and I stay with them every summer for about three or four days; they've got a very nice house in the country in Italy, and we go and stay with them regularly and then we endlessly discuss books and



they play gramophone records every evening and so on, so that could be described as the kind of life you're talking about.

SMITH: Francis Watson?

HASKELL: Well, he's dead now, but I did know him. I knew him for donkeys' years. He was a very peculiar, extraordinary man. During the last few years of his life he lived fairly near Salisbury and he used to invite us every year to come and have dinner with him. As we can't drive, other people in Oxford, like Christopher White, the director of the Ashmolean, or someone, would drive us down and we'd all go and have dinner with him, so I did know him pretty well, and Larissa liked him enormously. I got to know him quite early because of my Italian eighteenth-century work, and he was very interested in the subject. After the war, he was the first person in England to put on a little exhibition of Venetian eighteenth-century painting, which I remember seeing.

I mentioned that on my solitary honeymoon I went to Venice because there was this Guardi conference, where I met Chastel. Well, Francis Watson was also at the conference, and he said, "Where have you come from?" I said I'd just come from Leningrad. I didn't tell him I was married because at that time it had to be deadly secret. In those days it was very rare for an English art historian or anyone else to marry a Russian, so I wasn't telling anyone until Larissa had actually been allowed to join me, but I did say that I had been there

# THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE PRESENT TIME  
BY  
JOSEPH NEALE  
OF THE BOSTON BAR  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOL. I.  
BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY  
J. NEALE, AT THE CORNER OF  
NASSAU AND NATHAN STREETS.  
1845.

to look at the Hermitage, and that was perfectly true. Larissa worked at the Hermitage then, and Francis said, "Oh, I wonder if you've met this woman at the Hermitage who's absolutely marvelous." He'd been on an official English delegation, one of the first ones when Russia began to open up. He said, "There's an absolutely delightful woman there," and then he mentioned Larissa's name, so then I just couldn't keep it in anymore. I said, "It just so happens that three days ago I married her." He almost collapsed with surprise.

SMITH: I did want to ask you, for the record, if you could talk a little bit about your wife and your marriage, because it is an unusual story, and it's also very romantic.

HASKELL: It is. The circumstances were very, very extraordinary. What happened was that I was going to travel with a very close Italian friend of mine, who is now a publisher in Rome. This was in 1962, when conditions in Eastern Europe were getting a bit more relaxed; in other words, you could travel without terrible problems. We weren't going to Russia, we were going to go to the old Austro-Hungarian Empire—Hungary, Czechoslovakia, southern Poland and so on. We had a plan, we worked out all the places we were going to go, and about a fortnight before our departure I suddenly got seriously ill and I had to have an operation, and that absolutely canceled everything. But then when I got over the operation I went to convalesce in Italy, first of all with a friend in the country





and then in Venice, where I had a very, very close friend, who is still an extremely close friend, an Italian art historian, Alessandro Bettagno. Whenever I went to Venice we had almost every meal together for a few days.

[Tape IX, Side Two]

HASKELL: Sandro told me there was a Russian woman in Venice who had brought some Russian pictures for the Biennale. This was when Russia rejoined the Biennale for the first time since the time of Stalin. Sandro was vaguely involved in the official art world, as well as being an art historian, and he was on various committees. He told me he'd met this woman once or twice and he said, "She's alone in her hotel and she's probably a bit lonely. Do you think I should invite her to join us? She speaks a bit of Italian. What do you think about that?" So I said, "Well, yes. Why not?" And he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll ring her hotel and if she's in I'll ask her to come and join us, and if she's not, well, never mind, we'll leave it alone." All this sounds made up, almost as made up as the Wind stories, but once again it's dead true. He rang her up, and this was Larissa of course and she answered the phone and he asked her to come and join us at this restaurant. So she came and this thing happened which was like something from books. I literally fell in love with her that night. In fact, in those days I used to keep a sort of travel diary, and I wrote that I'd met the only person I've ever seen who I wanted to marry.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language. It is argued that a knowledge of the history of the language is essential for a full understanding of the language itself. The paper then goes on to discuss the various factors which have influenced the development of the English language over the centuries. These factors include the influence of other languages, particularly Latin and French, and the influence of the social and cultural changes which have taken place in England. The paper concludes by suggesting that the study of the history of the English language is a fascinating and rewarding pursuit, and that it is one which should be encouraged in schools and universities.

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SMITH: This was the first person?

HASKELL: Literally the first person; it was the first time it had ever happened to me, and it was the first evening I'd ever set eyes on her. Sandro left, he had to go back, and Larissa and I stayed at the restaurant table and then moved to a café and talked about all sorts of things. I had to leave two days later, and I certainly knew that I wanted to marry her and I certainly knew that I was in love with her, but I didn't know her feelings. She was very friendly, but Larissa is naturally very friendly, and I didn't know whether she was in love with me and I certainly never thought I would ever see her again, because it was very extraordinary she'd been allowed out of Russia, and the thought that she'd ever be allowed out again was totally uncertain. I'd never been to Russia and I never thought that I'd go.

Two days later I had to go to Trieste, where I was going to stay with this other Italian friend, the publisher I told you about. Larissa knew the train I was taking to Trieste; it was a morning train and it was rather surprising because she's not, as I now know, an early riser. At any rate, the train was due at about nine twenty or so and at about eight Larissa suddenly arrived at my hotel where I was staying and she wanted to accompany me to the station. I then said, "Why don't you come tomorrow to Trieste and see me. I'll be there with this Italian friend. Why don't you come just for the day?" It was very, very difficult for



her. Afterwards we had terrible problems because at that time Russians in Italy were under Italian police control. I don't think she had to report to the police every day, but she had to be in the same town. Her visa was valid only for Venice, not for anywhere else. It was more or less like Cinderella; if she wasn't back in her hotel in the evening she would have been reported to the police. She did come to Trieste and she did stay that night and there was trouble with the police and one thing and another in Italy, but it was cleared up, and at that stage, after three days, it was totally clear we were completely in love, but the idea of being married or ever seeing each other again was still totally uncertain.

SMITH: But that was certainly something that you had broached with each other?

HASKELL: Not about marriage; that would have been unthinkable, I think, then. Remember, this was 1962. I suppose there must have been people who had married foreigners, but it was extraordinary. She had her mother—her father had just died, thank God. Larissa has subsequently told me her father would have terribly disapproved of her even knowing a foreigner.

SMITH: Was he a member of the Communist Party?

HASKELL: He had been an important military commander during the war, but he wasn't a party member. In fact, he'd had trouble and his brother had been arrested and tortured; of course party members were also. I don't think he was a





proper party member. He wouldn't have objected to me on political grounds. Larissa has described how terribly upset her father was about the Khrushchev speech denouncing Stalin, but that was more because they'd all believed that Stalin had saved Russia. He would have objected to me on nationalist grounds, possibly in the same way, in those days, a WASP American family wouldn't want their daughter to marry a Catholic or something. I think he would have felt it would be all wrong and he would have objected. Anyway, he was dead.

So we said goodbye, thinking probably we'd never see each other again, but we invented a code so that we could write to each other. We had to be extremely careful because even getting letters from abroad was a dangerous and tricky thing in those days, and Larissa was at the Hermitage.

SMITH: So couldn't you write to her on "official business"?

HASKELL: Absolutely, and this is what we did. All my letters were addressed to her at the Hermitage, never at her house, and they were all about art-historical matters on the surface, but every artist had a meaning for us. That's one of the reasons Tiepolo has remained a great favorite of mine—Tiepolo, for instance, stood for love; Guardi meant that there was trouble; and so on. So all of them were art-historical letters, ostensibly, but all with very particular meanings. All the letters had to be very, very cool. I think I used to have to sign them Francis Haskell, and that sort of thing. All the letters were opened by the censors, but



there was not much they could object to because they were very straightforward.

Then about nine months later, when I was in King's, quite late at night the phone rang suddenly and it was Larissa. She was in Belgrade. She had been sent to take pictures from the Hermitage to Belgrade, one of those sort of low-level cultural exchanges, and then she had to go on to Ljubiana and Zagreb. This was the time when the Russians were busy repairing relations with Yugoslavia and they were constantly sending cultural delegations there. She was going to be in Yugoslavia for about ten days and she gave me the name of her hotel. And of course for us in the West, Yugoslavia presented no problems. I don't think we even needed a visa to go, or if we did need a visa they gave it almost at once.

More or less the next day I took a plane to Belgrade, and a disastrous thing happened, a very ill omen, especially as I don't like planes. On airplanes I spend the whole time looking at my watch—how much longer is there? Just as I was thinking there was only about an hour and half to go, the pilot said, "Ladies and gentlemen. You've probably noticed"—which I certainly hadn't, because I never look out of the window in planes—"that we're going backwards rather than forwards. This is because we've developed mild engine troubles. There's no cause for alarm"—you know, the usual things they always tell you—"but I'm afraid we're directed to London's Heathrow. There's no immediate danger, but



we're not sure that Belgrade has the proper facilities." This was a nightmare for me because I knew that Larissa was waiting at the other end, so when we got back to England I rushed to get on a train, in fact the Orient Express, but I was not able properly to warn Larissa, because I didn't want to miss the train. I knew she'd be terribly worried, waiting, but of course once at the airport they do tell you that the plane isn't going to land. I did finally get to Belgrade, thirty-six hours late.

Despite everything that's happening in Yugoslavia now, both of us do retain a great soft spot for it, even for the Serbs, although what's going on is so horrible, because they were absolutely, totally marvelous to us. We went everywhere together, and Larissa said with enormous aplomb that we were an Anglo-Russian delegation. The Yugoslavs were expecting just Larissa to come, and I walked in and Larissa said, "This is my English partner, who's come to carry on with the cultural exchange." The Yugoslavs took it frightfully well, without blinking; they invited us to meals, to coffee, and all the rest of it. So we traveled all round Yugoslavia together and then decided it really would be enormously nice to marry, but we didn't know whether or how it would be remotely possible.

I then went to Russia with my friend, Ben Nicolson, because I wanted him to meet Larissa. He wanted to see the paintings at the Hermitage and I wanted

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him to meet Larissa because I didn't know whether I was being wise. I realize this was a terribly risky thing to do, risky in the sense that it wasn't just like marrying someone you could divorce afterwards if it didn't work or something. It would have been smashing up her whole life if something had gone wrong. If you've only met someone a few times before for a few days, it's more than just marrying the girl next door, so to speak, it really is. So Ben and I went and I met Larissa's mother for the first time and she was terribly sweet and nice. She could have blocked the whole thing because the law was that Russians were allowed to marry foreigners but even above the age of eighteen they still had to have parental permission as well as the permission of the authorities. Larissa's mother, who was going to be left completely on her own, was very, very kind indeed and didn't ever put any obstacle in our way.

I went back to England, again, not knowing we'd be allowed to marry, and then we decided that the only way to do it was to be completely above board. Khrushchev was still in power—this was about 1964, two years after we first met—and he had this son-in-law, Adzhubei, who became rather a vogueish figure, and he used to travel to the West; he traveled to New York and Italy. Some of my Italian friends were in the Communist Party, and I had told them about Larissa and me in strict confidence because I thought they might be able to help us. They said they'd met Adzhubei and so on. Thank God I told Larissa



about this because she said, "Whatever you do, don't do that. The one thing we mustn't get caught in is any sort of political upheaval." And by God she was right, because then Khrushchev fell you know, and like in the seventeenth century, all Khrushchevites were sent off to the provinces; it would have been very, very unhelpful indeed to have been caught up in that.

But in London my father did know the Russian cultural attaché, because he used to come to the ballet and official meetings and so on, so he knew him a bit personally and he talked to him about us. We've subsequently found out this Russian cultural attaché was someone who was deeply involved in spying in England, but at that time we didn't know and in any case it didn't matter. My father told him the story, which was a sensible thing to do, and meanwhile Larissa notified the party authorities in Russia.

SMITH: Was she a member of the party?

HASKELL: She'd been a member of the party for a while because before being allowed to go to Italy she was told that she could go abroad only if she joined the party. She preferred to join the party and go to Venice than not go to Venice, which seems to my mind the right sort of priorities; it didn't make a difference one way or another, except it was a terrible nuisance and there were endless meetings and so on. Larissa told the Leningrad party, or perhaps I told the Russian embassy and they informed the party authorities there. Anyway, at that



stage enormous pressure was put on Larissa not to go through with the marriage. They didn't say they would stop her; they said she'd be letting down the fatherland and letting down the party.

SMITH: Was the idea that she would emigrate to England?

HASKELL: Yes, she would come to England to live with me; that certainly was the idea. Larissa's very brave, and she did say, "Look, I am allowed to do this by Soviet law. I know that you can effectively stop me, but I'm allowed to do it and I intend to go ahead with it." At that stage they told her that they had been following me around and they told her they knew she met me at such and such a place and all that sort of thing. It was clear that they knew everything, because it was very, very unusual still at that stage for individuals to go to Russia. There was quite a lot of tourism to Russia, but it was in groups.

At any rate, Larissa and I had decided that we would go ahead with this, and in England, before getting married, you have to put the banns up publicly, either in a church if you're getting married in a church, or in a town hall, so that if you're already married someone can denounce you for bigamy. This was the thing I dreaded doing because I didn't want the press getting hold of it; not because I was a figure of any prominence, but just because I was marrying a Russian. You had to include the name and the address of the person you were marrying. The local press goes and looks at announcements of that kind and I





dreaded seeing the headline, "Cambridge Don to Marry a Russian." I had told the Russian embassy that I was determined to marry Larissa, but I also said we wouldn't make a fuss and I assured them she didn't want to leave for political reasons and we weren't going to exploit this or tell anyone. Thank God, in a sort of miraculous way the journalists never did get hold of it.

The Russians have a law, which I think they still have, a perfectly fair law, actually, which I don't disapprove of, that says if a foreigner wants to marry a Russian, he or she has to live one month in Russia. So I had to live in Russia for a month. I stayed in a hotel in Leningrad for a month, but the problem was that I couldn't marry before the month was up, and my visa was just for a month, or just one day over. It really was like a catch-22 situation in that way. I remember I flew to Helsinki then flew on to Leningrad from Helsinki because you couldn't get to Leningrad directly. Larissa met me and we had to rush straight to the local party office or whatever it was and sign on and register and everything else, and then they fixed our marriage for just about the day before I was due to leave. It still had to be signed, vetted, approved of by God knows how many people, so we weren't absolutely sure by any means if it would in fact actually happen.

According to Russian law in those days, I not only had to book the hotel room for a month, which was okay, but I also had to buy food coupons in



advance up to a certain value. I had to buy a month's worth of coupons, but I had every single meal with Larissa at her flat and her mother cooked, so I saved up all these coupons. The day before we married, still not knowing whether it was going to happen, we went to the shops and bought up caviar fit for any grand duke, thirty bottles of vodka, fifty bottles of champagne and so on; this was a month's rations to be spent on literally one meal. [laughter] I was in the marvelous position of not having any relations to invite, although by pure fluke we were walking around in a park the day before we were married and I met a French dealer I knew, Jean Cailleux, and his family. He ran a leading French gallery and he specialized in eighteenth-century art. I didn't know him at all well, but I did know him a bit. He said, "Hello Francis, how are you? What are you doing in Leningrad?"—that sort of thing. And I said, "In fact, I hope I'm getting married tomorrow. Would you like to come?" He was absolutely bowled over. They'd been complaining they hadn't had a chance to meet a Russian. They could go from their hotel to the museum, but to actually see inside a Russian house was impossible. I said, "You'll certainly see a Russian house tomorrow." So they were rather stunned by this and they came to our wedding.

Khrushchev had invented a thing called the Palace of Marriages, which was meant to be the equivalent of a church, a kind of secular church, because the registry office, which was where all the Russians always got married, was



thought to be somehow degrading for foreigners. So there was this terrible thing called the Palace of Marriages, with canned music, which to the Russians was something of a joke. Anyway, Larissa had invited all her friends, of course, and various relations had to come, and as we went in to get married we had to show our passports and our documents, which was reasonable enough. Of course my name is Haskell and on my passport it said H-a-s-k-e-l-l, but the Russians had made a transcription of this for their official documents, which I also had to show, and as you know there's no "H" in Russian, it's "G" so it was down as "Gaskell" in their documents. Almost at the very moment when we were walking down the equivalent of the aisle, the official said, "It's not the same person. It says Gaskell and he's Haskell." In those days especially, Russians were terrified of taking any responsibility; it was much safer for them not to allow us to marry, if you see what I mean, but that problem finally was surmounted, thank God, and we were married. It was late afternoon, and we all went back to Larissa's flat where there was probably the most princely wedding feast there has been since the Russian Revolution in terms of the spread on the table, drinks, and everything else. The next day I went back to Helsinki, and then from Helsinki I went to Venice and so on. Three months later Larissa arrived in England. We were married on August 10, and on Boxing Day [December 26] she arrived in England.





SMITH: She then had no trouble getting her exit visa?

HASKELL: Well, she did have trouble in the sense that they more or less sacked her from the Hermitage, and they were constantly putting up little obstructions and difficulties, but not seriously. It's very curious; despite Stalin and everything else, in some ways the Russians were tremendously legalistic. Obviously, someone quite important had given permission for the whole thing to happen. I don't know quite how or when, but obviously at some stage the visa had been authorized. I think once that had happened, despite every kind of obstructiveness and bloody-mindedness and rudeness and everything else—all of which were there in plenty—it was all right, if you see what I mean. None of us was quite certain it was going to be all right but it was.

SMITH: You were still in Cambridge?

HASKELL: I was still in Cambridge then, yes.

SMITH: Could you talk a little bit about your wife's education, because she's also an art historian.

HASKELL: Yes, absolutely. She's three years younger than I am. I had my sixty-sixth birthday the other day and she had her sixty-third birthday about a month before that. Her father was quite high up in the Russian army, and because of that there'd been troubles during the purges and so on. He hadn't been shot or anything else, but his brother, who was in the navy, had; you know,



every Russian's got a story of this kind. Larissa had been to school in the ordinary way and then the war came, and curiously enough, when the Germans invaded, Larissa and her mother were in Tbilisi, but then Larissa's mother, who was the nicest woman ever but who had an infallible instinct for doing the wrong thing said, "We can't stay here, we must go back home to Leningrad." As it turned out, they would have been quite safe in Tbilisi, whereas within three months the German armies were outside Leningrad. Her father, meanwhile, was out fighting on different fronts, and they were trapped in Leningrad in the coldest winter in all history and there was no food. Her stories about this are terrifying, you know . . . walking over corpses. One-third of the population died and she was there. So there wasn't terribly much education at that time; it was a question of survival.

Then when the blockade was more or less lifted, they got out of Leningrad. They got out across Lake Ladoga, and then they went right to the Urals. Larissa has extraordinary stories, slightly like in *Dr. Zhivago*, getting on a train, not knowing where it was going, where it was going to stop, going for days and days and days. They got miles and miles away, in the Urals, and there Larissa started going to school again.

They came back to Leningrad almost immediately after the war and their flat had been damaged a bit, but it hadn't been destroyed. Larissa went to the art



academy, which was where art history was taught, and she was trained as an art historian. She got a job in the Hermitage when she was quite young, in their old-master drawings section, where she was the favorite pupil of a man who was a rather famous Russian art historian called [Mikhail] Dobroklonski. I don't know if you noticed it yesterday in the study; there is a portrait of him in a Russian cadet uniform. He wrote the catalog of Italian drawings in the Hermitage and Larissa worked with him on that and she adored him. A terrible thing happened to him; all three of his sons were killed in the war. When I knew him he was an absolutely broken man, and his wife died of grief; it was a terrible story.

It's very, very extraordinary sometimes the way things happen in Russia. Dobroklonski was a convinced monarchist; he wasn't just not a party member, he was an actual monarchist and a devout Christian, but he hadn't been touched during the purges. This was partly because the purges, while organized by Stalin and the politburo of course, did depend at the local level on a lot of people denouncing other people to the police, and Dobroklonski was universally loved. He was a very, very sweet and kind man and even party members loved him, so no one denounced him and he survived this whole period. He loathed communism and talked about it to me quite openly. He was one of the people who was very, very pleased we were going to get married because he liked the idea of freedom, and he liked England. He'd been to London I think before the





First World War.

After Dobroklonski's three sons were killed, he didn't exactly adopt Larissa, because she had her parents, but he adored her and she used to see him every single day. In fact, when he did die, which was about a year after I met him, he bequeathed his entire library and his entire collection of pictures and drawings to Larissa. He really absolutely adored her. He did tell her that the one thing he did terribly, terribly want was a Christian burial, which was technically allowed. In theory, Christianity wasn't prohibited in Russia after the war, but a Christian burial wasn't an easy thing to arrange. But Larissa adored him and wanted to do what he wanted so she did arrange it all. This was after I knew her, but before our marriage.

In Russia, in those days, and I think still now, you just never had to retire; you could just keep on working. When I first went to the Hermitage, everyone there seemed over eighty; it was very, very extraordinary, all the people I met there. They were all rather marvelous, highly educated people, and from my point of view ideal because they could all speak French. If they were eighty in 1965 they were born in 1885 and therefore they had been educated before the Revolution and had even traveled to the West. I think I can say without boasting that they were terribly pleased to see me just because it was really very, very rare for them to see foreigners, except on official missions to



the museum. Art historians used to go to the Hermitage and ask questions, but actually to see them in the way that I could, going to their houses, gossiping with them, telling them about the West, and telling them about art historians they wanted to know about; that sort of thing was unusual and I think they were genuinely pleased. So in that way it all went fine. They were all very helpful, though the authorities weren't, and the Communist Party certainly wasn't. So Larissa's training, therefore, was as an art historian at the academy and then in the Hermitage working on old master drawings and the catalog of Italian drawings with Dobroklonski.

SMITH: Did she continue her career after coming to Britain?

HASKELL: When she came to England she was terribly, terribly keen to go on with her work. We wanted to have children and then for biological reasons we didn't have children, but Larissa wanted very much to carry on with work. At Cambridge at that stage it was extremely difficult, not because there was any hostility, but there just wasn't an opening, so she took various temporary jobs in schools, teaching Russian, and giving private lessons to graduate students in Russian, and things of that kind, which she enjoyed doing in a way, but it wasn't very satisfactory. Also, very soon after she joined me in England, we knew that I would be coming to Oxford, so there wasn't much point in trying very hard to get a job in Cambridge because we knew it wouldn't last long.



When we came to Oxford, Larissa then did get involved in the Ashmolean quite a lot. There were lots and lots of people involved in the drawings there, but by a marvelous bit of luck the Ashmolean has the most important collection of Russian drawings in England and probably in the West, acquired entirely through a Russian émigré who was persuaded to leave his entire collection to the Ashmolean. This was wonderful. It was pure fluke and a marvelous coincidence. Quite soon after we arrived in Oxford the Ashmolean asked Larissa to catalog the drawings, and although Russian drawings wasn't her field, she still knew more about them than anyone else, and she could read the inscriptions. So she did a catalog, which was published and has now gone into a second edition, and then after she'd done that she was asked by the Victoria and Albert Museum to catalog their Russian collection. They've got quite a good Russian collection of ballet designs by [Leon] Bakst, one of the great Russian artists. So she did that and various other jobs of that kind and she has been involved in exhibitions; they've been what you might call freelance jobs, but associated not so much with her main field, which was Italian old masters (about which she continued to write, however, for various journals), as with Russian artists.

SMITH: Of course it was the Italian old masters that allowed you two to meet in the first place.

HASKELL: Well exactly, exactly. On one of the visits I made to Russia, before





we married, I gave her what was at that time one of my most beloved possessions, which was indeed an etching by Tiepolo, because, once again, Tiepolo had this great significance for us. It was a very, very beautiful etching, and I gave her that as a kind of present. I was delighted to give it to her of course, but, you know, at that time I thought that was the last I'd ever see of it. Then of course when we got married she was able to bring it back, so it's here with us and we've both got it, as before. In those days, paradoxically enough, it was easy, perhaps scandalously easy, for Russians to take out works of art. Once Larissa got permission to marry, I think she had to apply to take works of art and books that were over a hundred years old out of Russia and she had to pay some sort of reverse duty for taking them out, but it wasn't huge, it was three hundred rubles or something, which in those days was not an enormous sum. I remember we made endless trips to the post office, and the post office clerk had to see everything and things had to be stamped and so on; it was a great bore, but it wasn't illegal.

Dobroklonski had a marvelous library of Russian art books, the kind which are very, very rare in the West. He had every sort of classic book and he had dozens of books given to him by the authors from around the world, and it was very nice that Larissa was able to bring them over here because it has helped her in her work. And it also meant, which was terribly important for her, that

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she didn't feel cut off.

When Larissa and I came to Cambridge, and even when we first came to Oxford she used to get frightfully upset because everyone would say, "Oh, you managed to escape," or "You managed to choose freedom," and so on. She used to get so upset because the implication was that we'd married just so that I could get her out of Russia, and this was absolutely not the case. On the contrary, she'd lost a very good job in Russia and left all her friends and her mother behind. She hadn't herself suffered in any way under communism, if you see what I mean; in those days there was no food shortage or anything else of that kind. From her point of view, the only advantage, apart from the fact that we loved each other, was that we could travel as much as we wanted in the West, which she wouldn't have been able to do if she had remained in Russia. In so many ways, apart from our own relationship of course, the whole move actually presented difficulties for her. She used to burst into tears and I'd tell people not to say that sort of thing. Now she laughs at it, and anyway now no one bothers to say it any longer, but it was very difficult at first.

SMITH: Did she know English?

HASKELL: Yes, she did, not nearly as well as she does now, but yes she did. We used to speak in a kind of jargon of English and Italian. At first we spoke a lot in Italian, then increasingly more in English. But she'd always been able to



read English. Larissa's Russian education was deeply impressive—far better than anyone in England would have got. She'd been brought up being taught English, German, and French, and she learned Italian when she went to Italy. She picked it up very quickly; you know how the Russians are said to be good at languages. But she read English, French, and German, and she read far more than I ever had, so in that way she'd been extremely well educated.





SESSION FIVE: 25 APRIL, 1994

[Tape X, Side One]

SMITH: I thought we might start off today by reviewing the work of some of your students.

HASKELL: Well, obviously, the last thing I want to do would be to just run through a list of all the students I've had and what they're all doing. It's just that when you asked me the other day, as always happens in these circumstances, every single name went blank, and I couldn't think of anyone. I did want to make the point that I have had some students who I've been very, very glad to have, and I thought it might be a good idea to mention several of them. Some I have mentioned in passing, in other connections. I did talk about Jon Whiteley, who is now at the Ashmolean. He was the first research student I had and he came to me with great enthusiasm for certain aspects of French nineteenth-century academic art. This was just when I first came to Oxford and that subject was still very much on my mind, so it seemed a rather extraordinary coincidence that I should find someone quite spontaneously wanting to do that. He wrote an absolutely first rate thesis on the neo-Grecs. One of his examiners was Robert Rosenblum, who was then in Oxford as Slade Professor, so that all worked out very well.

I'm almost certain I have mentioned one or two others in passing, such as



Gerard Vaughan, who worked on this eighteenth-century collection and discovered all this amazing information about collectors of antiquities in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century, which really transformed the extent of our knowledge of the subject. His thesis hasn't yet been published but will be quite soon.

SMITH: He's the fellow from Australia?

HASKELL: Yes. He's now working in the British Museum and he's trying to raise money for the British Museum, but fortunately he is on leave and he assures me that he's going to turn his thesis into a book—it's already been accepted for publication.

I also mentioned Charles Hope, who worked on the almost antiquarian subject of the letters and documents of Titian, but during the course of that research he came out with many thoroughly subversive ideas on current orthodoxies about iconography. So those are three that I think I have already mentioned. Others, of course, to some extent have worked in fields in which I'm interested and I suppose they came to me partly because of that.

There's a young man called Tim Wilkes, who worked on the art collecting and patronage of Prince Henry, who was the elder brother of Charles I. Prince Henry died very young. He was going to be king had he not died, so Charles I came to the throne. Charles was one of the very first people in England who

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was, as a patron, interested in art abroad. It was widely assumed that this interest in art, which he developed in such a spectacular way, to some extent was inspired by his elder brother, Prince Henry. But what the elder brother actually had done had never really been discussed, and Tim Wilkes produced a very good thesis on that.

SMITH: Has that been published?

HASKELL: No, bits of it have been published in the form of articles, which I think probably is the most sensible way of dealing with that particular thesis. Then there was a pupil of mine, Richard Wrigley, who wrote a thesis which has just appeared in the form of a book, on French eighteenth-century art criticism, sort of salon criticism, which has been very much a theme of my teaching in this department. There's another thing I ought to have mentioned. Pupils of mine have produced three volumes of a bibliography of French nineteenth-century art criticism. It's just a list of dates and publications and so on, but it is an absolutely invaluable research tool.

Another pupil of mine, Iain Pears, also wrote a thesis which was turned into a book, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*, which has gone into two editions, published by the Yale [University] Press. The English became famous in the eighteenth century as art collectors, and this book looks at how this came about—the first auctions, and the

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financial and social implications of English collecting and so on—because previously, apart from very, very restricted court circles for a brief period during Charles I's reign, the English had never shown any interest in art.

A joint pupil of mine and of Jon Whiteley's, Neil McWilliam, wrote a thesis which has also just been published as a book a month or two ago, about French nineteenth-century left-wing ideas in the first half of the nineteenth century—ideas inspired by Fourier and Saint-Simon—and the impact of these on art and the attitudes to art. Neil teaches at the University of East Anglia.

Another pupil, Colin Bailey, who is now chief curator at the Kimbell Museum at Fort Worth, wrote a thesis on French eighteenth-century art collectors and patrons, which I think is going to appear as a book very soon now. I could go on like this, but it's rather invidious singling out certain people and not others. In previous conversations you asked me what would happen if someone came to me with a purely formal approach or a connoisseur's approach, and I did say that I would tell them there really wasn't much point in them doing it with me, not because I despised the subject, but because I wouldn't be adequate for taking them on. So the people I have taken on, on the whole, and I've just mentioned a sample, are people who have been working in fields which I've been interested in teaching here, and they have had books published and they've done very well.

SMITH: To what degree do you help get their work published or get them jobs?



HASKELL: Well, it would be stupid to deny that if I write to a publisher it won't have any effect. It does have some effect to the extent that I suppose with a strong recommendation from me it would be taken more seriously than if they didn't have such a recommendation, but I'm sure you know as well as I do that publishers are mysterious and they have their own criteria, and also they are very sensitive to commercial considerations. Even university presses are now this way. It would be almost impossible to get a publisher to take on certain types of books or certain theses, no matter how good they were, if he didn't think they were going to be commercial successes.

As far as jobs go, I suppose, in a way, much the same thing applies. In England, and from what I've heard also in the United States, it is harder and harder to get jobs in the field of art history. If you asked me how I spend my time in this department, I would say that a very high proportion of my time is spent just writing letters of reference for people looking for jobs, both in the United States and here. Sometimes I find myself writing twenty or thirty letters for the same person, just one after another. I can think of two American students, for instance, who I'm doing that for at this very minute. Every single day I'm writing references for them because there is intellectual unemployment in America as well as over here. It's not as bad in America as it is over here, but still it does exist. There again, I suppose I would like to think that references



from me played some part in getting them jobs, but it's difficult to say how much. There are whole systems of customs and traditions in the different countries, and I've found that references for pupils getting jobs in America are required to be enormously more enthusiastic than they are in England for the same thing. I'm always rather scared of including *any* criticism of a pupil for an American job because one feels that will absolutely sink them.

SMITH: It's a very bad thing to do, yes.

HASKELL: At the same time it is frightening, because when you feel that someone is absolutely terrific, I mean of really major standing, it's difficult to know what to say, because every single reference we get from America begins with, "This is one of the twenty most highly-motivated students I've ever taught in my whole teaching career." Every single reference from America begins that way. If you do that every time it just is very hard indeed to distinguish when the person really means it, so that does present real problems.

SMITH: Along those lines do you spend time doing tenure reviews and promotion reviews?

HASKELL: The tenure question hasn't until now been much of a problem in England. Fairly frequently, by which I mean three or four times a year, I do get letters from America asking me about tenure, and I do answer them of course, because one wants to support people, but I do find it extremely difficult because





often I'm asked to evaluate people whom I've never met. I'm expected to know all their work, and I don't by any means have all that time just to settle down for two or three weeks to read through everything. I don't say I resent it, but it's not at all easy to do; it does require a great deal of time and it does seem to me that some of the universities who make these requests are a bit cavalier or a bit thoughtless in the way they expect one to drop everything and accommodate them.

A similar sort of thing of course happens when they write and say they are thinking of making an appointment in the field of art history and there are five or six people they're interested in and they want me to say something about each candidate, or they ask if I can think of someone else, bearing in mind that they are particularly keen on taking ethnic minorities and all the rest of it. So, yes, in one way or another quite a lot of time is spent in doing this sort of thing both for America and England and to some extent even on the European Continent.

SMITH: In the case of *Patrons and Painters*, your first substantive book I guess we could say, did you find the publisher for that yourself or did Pevsner help you with that?

HASKELL: The way that worked is one of these things that now is looked upon as almost prehistoric. I think I mentioned that through my friend Benedict Nicolson I belonged to a lunch club in London, which used to meet once a



month. At one of these lunch clubs I was sitting next to someone who was a publisher at the firm Chatto and Windus, which was then a totally independent firm—now it's part of some great conglomerate but then it was a totally independent firm. For want of something to say, this man, Peter Calvocoressi, asked me what I was doing and I told him I was writing a book on patrons and painters. I just told him what it was about, and over lunch he said, "That sounds very interesting. You know, we've never published an art book, but it sounds like a very interesting idea. Why don't you send me a chapter?" So I put a chapter in an envelope the next day and about three days later I got a letter back saying, "We'd love to publish it." It seems so incredibly casual. Now I imagine it would have to go through committees and bankers and God knows what, but that just happened over lunch in that way. Very extraordinary.

SMITH: Since then you seem to have switched over to university presses.

HASKELL: *Rediscoveries in Art* had to be published by Phaidon under the terms of the Wrightsman Lectures—deeply to my regret because I hated working for Phaidon. I thought they did the book perfectly decently, but I just wasn't at all happy. When I was at Oxford, before *Rediscoveries in Art*, I met a young man, John Nicoll, who was working in a relatively junior post at the Oxford University Press. Soon after I came to Oxford I was invited, as a kind of routine thing, to a luncheon to meet people from the Oxford University Press, and I found myself



sitting next to John. I liked him tremendously at once, and I think he liked me, and we got on very well. I gave a lecture here about Italian patronage of French neo-classical art, which had to be published by Oxford University Press because it was a lecture given at Oxford, and John worked with me on that. Fairly soon after that he was put in charge of Yale University Press in London, which is really independent from the New Haven press. John has to bring projects before a committee in New Haven, but the whole thing is run by him. I liked working with him so much that just about everything I've ever done, unless it had to be with another publisher for contractual reasons, I've done with John.

Exactly the same thing has happened with Italian publishers. I've operated almost entirely in terms of who I've liked working with. It's always seemed to me that a relationship with a publisher's slightly like doctors and their bedside manner, as it were, and I like to be taken out to lunch and that sort of thing. I enjoy the feeling that I'm being looked after, and John Nicoll is absolutely wonderful at that and he's terribly helpful and thoughtful in that way. So it was really an act of friendship as much as anything else. *The Painful Birth of the Art Book* had to be with Thames and Hudson, but otherwise, whenever I've had the chance, I've worked with John.

SMITH: How closely does he and his editorial staff work with you in developing the book?





HASKELL: Wonderfully closely, which is what I like. Actually, a very extraordinary thing happened with another pupil of mine, Gillian Malpass. She was working on Samuel Rogers, the great English art collector of the early nineteenth century, once again partly through my interests. She was very gifted, but somehow her research was going wrong and her private life was going wrong and she wasn't happy. John Nicoll rang me up—this was a total coincidence—and asked if I knew anyone who could help him in a temporary job at Yale Press, ordering illustrations; they were doing a catalogue raisonné of Turner. He needed someone to work for three weeks or something. Since Gillian wasn't happy, I asked her if she would be interested and she said yes. She went to London, worked with him, and has been such an outstanding success with him that she's now really managing the whole business with him. She's sort of second in command and chooses books herself, and the whole thing has expanded. John doesn't have time to work very much on any individual book, although he's always terribly thoughtful about it, but with Gillian it's almost like a collaboration. I spent hours and hours with her on this last book [*History and Its Images*], just working together every single day. So there is very close collaboration, and I love that. We worked on the problem of how to arrange illustrations together. She took care of the professional side. I'd say that I was trying to make a particular comparison between this and this, and she would



somehow work it out on the page and so on.

SMITH: But you selected the illustrations?

HASKELL: I selected them, but luckily again Yale was very, very helpful.

Yale makes the authors pay for the illustrations, and I've just got my bill, and it really comes to a huge sum. But at least they were frightfully good about doing the actual work and writing to the places and asking for permission themselves. I think I'd pay almost any sum rather than have to write for permissions everywhere.

SMITH: You're supposed to get Oxford to pay for it.

HASKELL: Well, I know, and sometimes of course I can. Sometimes—and I've always regarded this as perfectly legitimate and I always encouraged my own research students to do it—I bought photographs for our department here, which are then kind of borrowed by students for publication. Of course there's still a copyright fee, but ultimately they belong to the department and I've always regarded this as not only legitimate but thoroughly desirable that the photographic collection should be built up in this way.

SMITH: At Cambridge, when you were the librarian of the fine arts faculty, you were also teaching art history from A to Z?

HASKELL: More or less, yes, but not quite, because the way it worked certain topics were selected, and I had to teach certain periods. What is absolutely true



is that I was working completely out of my depth, in a way, and sometimes I was in a desperate rush just to keep ahead of the students. I hoped that I could read just one more book than they had, so that I would have something to say. I must say that it was quite good for me in the sense that it widened fields of interest, but it was rather scary.

SMITH: Was that the only time that you've had to teach an art-historical survey?

HASKELL: Yes, really, yes.

SMITH: So your lectures here at Oxford are all thematically focused, as I understand it.

HASKELL: Yes. My lectures at Oxford are focused on this special subject I teach, mainly French nineteenth-century art. For undergraduates, as part of what they call special subjects for history, there is a course called "Baudelaire and the Artists of his Time," and then there's another related course called "French Art and Art Criticism of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," and I do another one about French late nineteenth-century art. So these are all thematically oriented, and then there are the open lectures I give, which as I say, tend to be related to books or current research of mine.

SMITH: In terms of doing the survey, did you find that helpful to you in terms of consolidating your identity as an art historian?

HASKELL: Yes, yes. I can't pretend that I enjoyed it much, because it does





make one feel rather fraudulent, if I can put it that way. But like so many things in life which one doesn't at all enjoy at the time and is rather miserable about, I can't deny that in retrospect I'm quite glad I did it, because, yes, it did make me have to do all sorts of things I would never otherwise have done.

SMITH: Have you done any guest teaching in American or Continental universities?

HASKELL: In Paris I gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France and that sort of thing, and I've lectured at American universities. I don't suppose the Wrightsman Lectures count in the way you're talking about. But what I haven't done at all is what you might call proper teaching. I've now been asked, when I retire, to be involved in this Committee of Social Thought at the University of Chicago. I had lunch in Paris the other day with François Furet, who is one of the people involved. I would certainly not settle down there or anything, but I've tentatively agreed to try it as an experiment for one term or semester to see if it worked on both sides, and then if it did, possibly each year I would do something like one semester of teaching there. I quite enjoy teaching, and I think it would be quite good. Also, frankly, after retirement, the income would be welcome. But certainly I couldn't imagine moving to Chicago permanently or anything of that kind.

SMITH: Yes. It'll be quite a different experience for you.

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HASKELL: This is what I view with some anxiety, yes. We'll have to see how it works out.

SMITH: This is a more speculative kind of question, but I wonder if you have drawn lessons from the studies you did for *Rediscoveries in Art* about museums and contemporary tastes—about what we might call the structure of the art market or the taste market.

HASKELL: What's happening now with contemporary art?

SMITH: Right. Or with contemporary interests in art, all of which does not necessarily have to be contemporary art.

HASKELL: Oh, I see, yes. Well, it is clearly a thing that is a constant source of interest to me, what museums are buying and whether I think they're buying rightly or wrongly and the changes that have occurred. I sit on this committee, the National Art Collections Fund, and there's constant debate about whether something is the sort of thing that an American museum might want, because this rather affects what the structure of the price will be. There are things that American trustees wouldn't take, but certain American millionaire collectors might. I am acutely conscious and deeply interested in these debates about what is likely to go where.

SMITH: As you participate in these discussions, do the lessons that you've learned as a historian resonate and appear to be relevant, or is that something you



need to be cautious about?

HASKELL: I think they do. It would be awfully hard to give a totally straightforward answer to that question based on individual cases, but I think it is true to say that the work I did do on *Rediscoveries in Art* certainly did play a part which has been fruitful in trying to work out what should go where and what I can suggest the museums should do. Had I not done that work I would not have felt able to make recommendations with the same confidence.

SMITH: Have you been at all tempted to write about the contemporary situation?

HASKELL: To some extent, but as I think we've mentioned once or twice before, the material on the contemporary situation is extremely inaccessible compared with material on the past. The committees I sit on are confidential, not in the sense that anything very secret is transacted, but I do hear about prices which have been paid for pictures and about things that the art market is doing which I'm bound not to reveal. Sometimes in gossip you can say things and it doesn't really matter, but I would regard it as totally irresponsible and I'd be in terrible trouble if I used what I'd learned from what goes on in these meetings to write a book. Occasionally journalists do ask me questions and they want to know things, and I would never tell them because I think it would be wrong. But one doesn't have such an obligation to confidentiality if one is talking about what happened in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. So it is paradoxical, but it





would be much, much harder now.

SMITH: We talked a little bit about André Chastel, though perhaps not enough. He's one of those major figures of postwar European cultural life, not so much because of his own scholarly work, but his institutional presence, and in some ways Giulio Carlo Argan in Italy played a similar though not quite as centralized a role. Looking at Chastel and Argan as being in some ways parallel figures, or Anthony Blunt in Britain, or even Millard Meiss in the United States, do you think such figures exist today? Let's take Chastel as the ideal type.

HASKELL: No. I'm sure that is not the case. Even in Italy Argan was very, very important in the sense that he wrote a textbook which was widely adopted in schools and universities, but he was in the Venturi camp, and there was always this strong rival camp of Roberto Longhi's, so I don't think the Italian situation can be related to the French in that way. In Italy there was a kind of civil war going on, if I can put it that way, and the Longhians looked upon Argan and indeed Venturi and [Carlo] Ragghianti and various others with absolutely unmitigated contempt. So it wasn't as simple as that.

I think Chastel was the best art historian in France in many ways, and certainly institutionally I entirely agree, and I'm certain he hasn't been replaced. Chastel almost single-handedly pulled French art out of the stultifying provincialism and nationalism in which it had existed almost since 1914, and



what I find very sad is that I think it's now gone back to that [earlier state], to some extent. Among the French there's [Jacques] Thuillier, and there's Pierre Rosenberg, who are certainly very bright, but none of them have got the kind of range or the intellectual distinction or sheer vision or the international recognition of achievement that Chastel did have, so I think that he certainly hasn't been replaced.

In England Anthony Blunt was extremely important for Courtauld students and it is absolutely true that the great majority of art historians in England did go through the Courtauld. I think that the current head of the Courtauld, who is a very nice man and so on, isn't remotely of the Anthony Blunt stature. I think there are some quite talented art historians in England, but I don't think there is anyone you could call Mr. Art History, so to speak, in the way that one might have felt about Anthony Blunt. But one might have felt that about Anthony Blunt only after the main Warburgians, such as Wittkower, had left the country. Gombrich's book *The Story of Art* has been by far the most successful general approach to art history in England and I think probably the world. It's translated into every language; it's sold God knows how many millions of copies, so in that way it has been enormously important. On the other hand, as Gombrich and others have frequently pointed out, there is no such thing as a Gombrichian school of art history. In other words, I don't think that these figures have been

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replaced.

In America it would be harder for me to say. We've talked about Meyer Schapiro. He is obviously now no longer teaching or anything, but looking at it from the outside I would have thought in a way that Meyer Schapiro was more important than Millard Meiss, but I just don't know enough about the American situation.

SMITH: I'm thinking of this combination of scholarship and the ability to move people and get funding for projects.

HASKELL: Someone like Irving Lavin gives the impression of certainly wanting to be that.

SMITH: Well, he may very well be, yes, and he has the same base, in many respects.

HASKELL: At any rate, among the French, English and Italian art historians, about whom I can speak, I don't think there is anyone who has assumed those positions in any of those three countries.

SMITH: Do you think the Chastel-type figure can continue to exist today?

HASKELL: Yes, I think it can. In theory it should be able to exist far more easily today than in the time of Chastel. I mean, if we're talking about the possibility, as opposed to the individual, yes, because the French are desperately keen now to set up a kind of French equivalent of the Courtauld or the Warburg.





I may have mentioned that I was on a committee to turn the old Bibliothèque Nationale into an art-historical research center, and that would give a kind of power base far greater than anyone has now, because now the French art historians are divided really between the Collège de France, where Thuillier is, and he lectures largely to fashionable ladies from the Faubourg St.-Honoré sort of world, and the museum curators like Michel Laclotte and Pierre Rosenberg, who are very good. In very recent years there have been a few new art historians at Nanterre and elsewhere, but I don't think there's anyone in the French universities who's got a really important voice in France, and if this "French Courtauld," to call it that just for shorthand convenience, really does come into being, then I'd think there certainly would be a place for a Chastel-type figure. As I say, whether you'll actually get someone like him or not will be a different matter, but there certainly would be a base for such a person.

SMITH: So you think that Chastel played a positive role in European and French art history?

HASKELL: I feel convinced. He certainly has got enemies, I'm well aware of this, but I do think he played a part. I still believe that if people get on well with other people abroad, it isn't just a question of gossip and anecdotal interest; it is important. The fact that Chastel was a friend of Anthony Blunt, a friend of [Willibald] Sauerländer in Germany, a friend of Giuliano Briganti and of [H. W.]



Janson in the United States, and that they all visited each other was very important. Italy was the love of his life, and it's extremely positive, whatever anyone in France may say, to have a Frenchman who really does know and is interested and cares about Italian art, as distinguished from being exclusively concerned with French art and thinking that anything outside the French frontiers is pretty second-rate, which is what most French art historians unfortunately have thought and do think now.

SMITH: Unless the paintings are in the Louvre.

HASKELL: Unless the paintings are in the Louvre, in which case they're better than any paintings anywhere else. Yes, I entirely agree. Of course there are exceptions to this and I'm parodying the situation, and none of them would agree to my definition of it, but the fact does remain that there is some truth in it. Chastel really wasn't like that, so I think he did play a very positive role, despite all sorts of things that can be held against him.

SMITH: What about André Malraux?

HASKELL: Malraux was electrifying. He gave a fabulous lecture here in Oxford, which I remember going to. He was one of the most extraordinary people, just to meet; he certainly was charismatic. But I also think some of his ideas, which appeared in his splendid books, were very exciting.

SMITH: *Le musée imaginaire*?



HASKELL: Yes. They are books I don't think anyone really understood. I certainly didn't, and I remember the fantastic feeling of relief I had once in Paris when I was talking to someone about Malraux. I said I found some of his ideas very exciting, but unfortunately there were whole chunks that I couldn't understand and I didn't think that this was my weakness in French, and this Frenchman said he found it absolutely the same. There were pages of almost meaningless rhetoric, but along with that there were very, very exciting ideas and the illustrations were dazzlingly new; I had never seen them in art books before. So I do think he was enormously important at the time. I think the whole notion of *le musée imaginaire* is one of the rather rare ideas that, perhaps since the war, has actually entered the vocabulary of thought of art historians in the same way as Berenson's "tactile values." You can say "tactile values" and people will know that you're quoting Berenson, and when you say, "le musée imaginaire," people will know you're quoting Malraux. That in itself has got significance.

SMITH: In terms of your publication of articles, you of course had a very close relationship with the *Burlington Magazine*, and you publish frequently in the *Times Literary Supplement*, though that seems to be more in terms of regular book reviews.

HASKELL: Yes, I've just sent off a review this morning to the *TLS*, but I do fewer and fewer book reviews now; I find it harder and harder and dislike it





more and more, really. When I was young it was my dream to write articles for the *Burlington Magazine*, and when I first started writing articles I published a lot in the *Burlington*. I wrote an article for them about a year or two ago, but over the last six or seven years I don't suppose I've done more than a couple of articles for the *Burlington*. I'm on the editorial board and I suppose partly for that very reason I haven't done very much.

[Tape X, Side Two]

SMITH: So you were chairman of the editorial board?

HASKELL: Yes, and when Ben Nicolson died I was very much involved in finding successors and all that sort of thing.

SMITH: In many respects that magazine was Nicolson's vision rather than the editorial board's.

HASKELL: Oh yes, of course.

SMITH: Were there times when the editorial board played a more active role?

HASKELL: Ben was extremely stubborn. There were times when the editorial board tried to take a more active role. For instance, there was a constant feeling that we ought to do more about the decorative arts, and Ben wasn't at all interested in the decorative arts. The editorial board felt, very reasonably I think, that the decorative arts were important and ought to be discussed somewhere, partly because of the whole question of getting advertisements; advertisers did



want to see those kinds of articles. I'm making a very, very careful distinction here in saying there was never any question of wanting to have an article on something that was on the market, which was a thing that did happen in certain periodicals I could name. On the contrary, everyone was absolutely pathologically nervous about ever doing anything like that. But we did realize that if you had one issue a year on the decorative arts, a number of people who would not normally advertise with you would do so even though the objects discussed in articles had absolutely nothing to do with the things they were trying to sell.

SMITH: But that was, in a sense, your periodical home base?

HASKELL: Yes, that and the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, I suppose. I've never played any part in the Warburg journal, but I wrote an article for it and I occasionally recommended something. I've known the people there and I always read it. So those are the two journals that meant most to me.

SMITH: And what led you to your first publication? Was it the friendship with Nicolson?

HASKELL: No, the friendship with Nicolson arose out of my submitting an article for the *Burlington*. As an editor, he was extremely good at reading very carefully, making corrections, and suggesting changes, so I met him when I submitted an article I did when I was working on the Jesuits; it was about a Jesuit



chapel, and I got to know him as a result of that.

SMITH: Was he a Cambridge man?

HASKELL: No, he was at Oxford, at Balliol.

SMITH: I suppose the thrust of my question was, as you did research and completed articles, did you always know where you were going to send them? Could you assume, all things being equal, that they would get published?

HASKELL: Well, not when I first started of course. By no means did I know they would be published. I don't remember ever having an article turned down by anyone, to be honest. Certainly when I found material which I thought would make an article, my instinctive hope was to have it published in the *Burlington*. Then later—and this happens to everyone—when I did achieve a certain reputation, other journals asked me to publish things with them, but my first instinct was always to write something for the *Burlington*.

SMITH: And that continues in some ways?

HASKELL: Well, now I do very little in the way of what you might call scholarly articles. I write articles nonstop, but they are much longer pieces than would go into the *Burlington*. I've recently been asked to do one of those things that I normally dread doing, an article for a festschrift, which is always a nightmare; they always interrupt something else you're doing and then they get lost. Anyway, I was asked to do one for Michel Laclotte, the director of the





Louvre, who's retiring. He's a friend of mine and I felt I couldn't refuse. I did a piece which would be absolutely useless for the *Burlington*; it was on a subject which, as far as I know, has never been treated anywhere: the origins and development of old master exhibitions, which started in the nineteenth century. That is not a thing I think I would have done for the *Burlington* because for one thing it was too long, and although it does offer new information and new ideas and everything else, it isn't scholarly in the *Burlington* sense; there was nothing from manuscript sources. It involved looking through enormous numbers of exhibition catalogs in all sorts of different languages, trying to see what was said about them in the press at the time and so on, but it wasn't exactly a *Burlington*-type article, which would be much more object-based, and based on new information from archives. So I've done very, very little for the *Burlington*, but I've just done an article for this exhibition at the Wallace Collection that I mentioned and this man Demidoff, who was an art collector. Again, it wouldn't really do for the *Burlington*, although I don't think anything much has been written about Demidoff as an art collector.

SMITH: But there was your *Burlington* article on Coningham ["William Coningham and His Collection of Old Masters," *Burlington Magazine* 133: 676-81, Oct 1991]

HASKELL: That article had an interesting origin; it also started life as a



festschrift article. I collected material on Coningham for years; in fact, in my book *Rediscoveries in Art* I said in a note that I was about to publish on Coningham, and then I waited donkeys' years to do something about it. I was asked to write again for a festschrift for Michael Jaffe, an old sparring partner and friend, so I wrote that article on Coningham more or less with that in mind, and then the festschrift folded up because it couldn't be subsidized. I then asked the *Burlington* if they wanted it and they said they would be happy to publish it, but that was about the last thing I did for them, other than the odd book reviews.

SMITH: In moving to conclusion, I have several kind of large questions, which don't require large answers. First, can we speak of rules of historical method that you follow? Do you have a historical method that is distinctively yours in terms of your work? I'm not talking in terms of your principles.

HASKELL: Do you mean methodology, in the technical sense?

SMITH: Yes.

HASKELL: Well, my methodology consists almost entirely of sticking things together with tape, if you mean that sort of thing. I don't use a computer or word processor or anything else; my manuscripts are chaotic scribbles, stuck with tape all over the place. Mrs. Ballard, my secretary, does now transfer my writings onto a computer and God knows if I shall ever write anything again when I retire, because I don't quite see how I'm going to ever be able to do that



myself.

SMITH: You may have to buy a computer.

HASKELL: Well I know, and Mrs. Ballard is always trying to persuade me and convince me; she promises to teach me, and if I have the time I really must learn. So absolutely everything I've written was handwritten or typed. *Patrons and Painters* was entirely typed out by me with three-finger typing. Since Mrs. Ballard entered my life, which is now about seven or eight years ago, she has been extremely nice and as she is also extremely efficient and wonderful, I've just become lazier and lazier. She can read my writing and all the rest of it.

SMITH: To what degree do you know what you're writing before you sit down and write? Do you know what you're going to write beforehand, or is that something that emerges out of the drafting?

HASKELL: I'm quite introspective about this. I think it must be the most terrible, wasteful method ever, but I can't write anything at all until I've started worrying about it, if that's the right word. I mean, reading and worrying and concentrating and thinking about it half the night and everything else in a most futile way. I waste hours and hours of time. I can't write, I can't do anything until I've got through this stage. After having spent about a week or ten days driving myself mad about it, I then can't do anything until I've actually managed to write a page. I just force myself to write the one page and then it somehow in





a curious way comes out after that quite quickly. But I really have to switch off absolutely everything except the one thing I'm doing. I find it extremely difficult to write two or three things at once—something which other people who I terribly admire and envy can do. I do realize in this way I must be rather extraordinary. Once I've got going I can write a lot, and I am very, very productive, but it is a very wasteful process. Obviously something is going on inside me when I'm not writing, in a strange way, but I don't know what it is and I couldn't possibly explain it.

SMITH: Is there a long process of doing archival research before you even begin to worry about what you're going to write?

HASKELL: No, usually that comes afterwards. I tell all my pupils about the way I do it, and of course they react in different ways, because obviously only certain temperaments can do it my way, but I almost believe in writing a book, or at any rate an article, before I have any idea of the facts, of archive contents, or anything else; and then amending it after the research is completed. I sometimes tell pupils of mine they ought to finish their theses before they begin their research. I know this sounds like a paradox, but there is something in it all the same, because it's only when you do that that you know what you should be looking for, and if I begin on Coningham or whoever it might be, I could go on forever, so I try and write the thing, almost inventing material sometimes, saying



something like, "Coningham was deeply interested in Spanish art," and then I'd just find out whether he ever bought a Spanish picture. If not, I'd then have to change it accordingly. That is very much the way I work.

SMITH: So you proceed on hunches?

HASKELL: Yes.

SMITH: And to what degree logic?

HASKELL: Much more hunches than logic.

SMITH: What do you think the role of the art historian has been and is in shaping fashion and public taste?

HASKELL: Oh, well, it certainly has been enormous, in the way that I most hate, I mean, auction prices would be radically different, the contents of art museums would be different, queues going into exhibitions would be going into different exhibitions and so on, so yes I do think in these ways the art historians have played an absolutely enormous role. It's a kind of frightening responsibility, I think. When I use the phrase "art historian," I sometimes mean it in an anachronistic sense, because, as I mentioned yesterday, I don't think that someone like Ruskin was an art historian, exactly; nonetheless, he did write about art, so I'm using the word "art historian" to mean "writers on art," but I don't think now there are many people left who write on art who are not art historians, if you see what I mean. Art historians also play a large part in what is preserved



as national heritage and what is destroyed or sold abroad and all that sort of thing.

SMITH: As you're writing your books, do you view yourself as someone who's going to reshape public opinion or public taste?

HASKELL: No, that would be colossally overdoing it, but I don't deny that it does occur to me sometimes that what I am writing will have some sort of impact. I do try and reshape public taste somewhat when I occasionally write a letter to the *Times* protesting about something, whatever it might be. Then of course when I actually write an article or a book, I don't think it's going to reshape public taste, but I am aware to some extent that people will look at things in a different way. I sometimes have seen this in action in the sense that I have seen little plagiarisms of books of mine, or I read articles which I know perfectly well have been taken straight from something I've written.

SMITH: But not direct, actionable plagiarism.

HASKELL: No, not actionable plagiarism, and I'm not saying this happens every day, of course not, but I do see things that I just know must have come from something I wrote, but it's not actionable plagiarism—absolutely not in that way.

SMITH: Do you view it as part of your responsibility as a professor at Oxford to put forward opinions that will influence public opinion or public taste, however





one defines the public nowadays?

HASKELL: I suppose yes, a little. I suppose I try and influence my students, in a sense. I don't try and turn them into disciples; that would be all wrong, but I can't deny that if a pupil of mine does produce a paper or an essay of an extremely theoretical kind which pays almost no attention at all to my work, I do say it may be all right, but it's not the way he or she ought to work for me, if you see what I mean. So in that way I do try and influence them. I suppose I do try and influence pupils in the direction of basing themselves on works of art, of an empirical approach, on writing clearly, and all that sort of thing.

SMITH: There is the question of the visual environment as opposed to art. Would you view the art historian as having as his or her object of study the visual environment?

HASKELL: Yes, I think I would, certainly.

SMITH: So you do not feel constrained by definitions of what art is or is not?

HASKELL: No. I had great discussions about this with Joseph Alsop, who wrote this book about collecting [*The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared*]. He was put onto me by Isaiah Berlin, who was a mutual friend. Joe often wrote to me—he was an enormously prolific letter writer—and I kept all his letters because they were very interesting. He used to show me drafts of bits of his book, and I



thought it was very, very important in the context of what he was arguing, to define what was meant by art. There were dozens of letters between us in which we'd argue backwards and forwards about this, but that was because it was in a particular context.

Whenever I was in Washington my wife and I always used to go and stay with Joe. He was one of those people who loved having conversations deep into the night over a bottle of whisky each or something, until four in the morning. So we had many discussions about what should one mean by "art."

SMITH: As you know, within the field of art history over the last decade there's been the revival of interest in things like telephone design or Kleenex boxes.

HASKELL: Yes, I know. I don't think I'm at all good at this or proficient or anything else, but I do think it is a good idea if that does enter within the domain of the art historian. I can't pretend that the design of telephones is of enormous interest to me, but I think it should be, if you see what I mean; I don't reject the idea at all.

SMITH: Have you had students who said they wanted to do some sort of industrial or commercial design?

HASKELL: Well, occasionally people have approached me about this, but once again it has been one of those many cases in which I have said, "Well, good luck to you, I think it's well worth doing, but I'm afraid it's no use doing it with me



because I simply can't help you."

SMITH: Though one might see, particularly in the nineteenth-century French context, there might be actually quite interesting overlaps.

HASKELL: Yes, I think there are, and I agree with you, certainly in things like posters and also, obviously, in other things. There have been cases in which people have done that and I've told them I didn't think I was the man to supervise their theses, but we'd talk about it and I'd give advice and guidance in that way.

SMITH: What are you working on now? Do you have another book project?

HASKELL: Well, it's as if the end of my scholarly life is rejoining its beginnings. I'm giving the Paul Mellon lectures, which will be entirely on the dispersal of the Stuart collections in England, which was the most radical dispersal of art there has ever been in the history of art. Curiously enough, it's never ever been discussed as a whole. If you wanted to find out where the pictures went, or if they were auctioned or sold, who bought them and all the rest, you'd have a hard time because it's never ever been seriously written about. I have to give six lectures, which won't be remotely enough to cover the whole topic, but I'm trying to work on them now. I certainly wouldn't publish them as lectures, but once again Yale Press has said they'd very much like to do it if I do turn them into a book.





SMITH: So this book would talk about government policy towards the arts, and diplomacy?

HASKELL: Yes, diplomacy, and it would talk about the whole notion of iconoclasm, and is it a good thing that the arts exist at all. Just to take one tiny example, one of the very, very curious phenomena that happened at the time is that when Charles I was beheaded, the government sold off his collection to pay off debts, and the people who first bought things were not at all foreign monarchs; they were Englishmen, including people who fought in the army. No one's really thought about it as far as I know, but colonels and people like that took away Titians into the country and it must have been the first time paintings of this kind had ever extended anywhere in the world outside a very, very narrow circle of people; they were spread all over the country. Admittedly they were mainly bought by people who did plan to sell them again to someone else later on, but still, for a few years, there must have been the most extraordinary phenomenon seen at least since antiquity. Ordinary people now had major pictures by Titian and Correggio and Raphael—perfectly ordinary people—and I don't think anyone has thought about this and what it might have meant. So that's just one of the questions that is raised by this.

SMITH: You mean ordinary sort of upper-middle-class people?

HASKELL: Well, not necessarily even upper-middle-class people. On the



contrary, very often not upper-middle-class people, because during the revolution many people came to the top through their talents, whatever they might be, and they might even have come from lower middle classes. Cromwell himself was a kind of country gentleman. Debts to the King's plumber were paid off in pictures. Now the only interest, really, that the plumber had in pictures was to be able to sell them to someone else, ultimately, but this happened over a slow period. The plumber wasn't exactly the man who'd come and mend the pipe; he would be a kind of entrepreneur. Nonetheless, it didn't by any means follow that he was an upper-middle-class person; he was a kind of successful tradesman. They did have in their houses for a long time some of the world's great masterpieces, and it's quite an interesting thing to think about. And then rapidly the pictures went back to what you might call their natural owners, the kings and princes, all over again, but for a short time it was the biggest spread of great art that there has ever been. There are millions of other things like that, but that is one of the things I'm thinking about.

SMITH: It also sounds like the market process overrides diplomatic aspects.

HASKELL: Yes, I think this is true, but sometimes I think there's a conflict between them. There was the question of foreign royalty sending their agents over to England and so on, and then there was the question of what interested them, and again to some extent the prices and so on; there are lots and lots of



interesting problems raised by it.

SMITH: So you will be giving those lectures next year?

HASKELL: No, I wish it was; it's this year, in London, in October, and then at the Center for British Art in New Haven.

SMITH: That's actually one of my favorite museum buildings.

HASKELL: It is marvelous, isn't it? It is absolutely stunning, I think. I haven't been there for years. We were invited over by Mellon very generously for the opening because I am on the Mellon committee in London and he invited the whole committee over. We had a week of nonstop champagne drinking and celebration and one thing and another. I think the building is absolutely marvelous, yes.

SMITH: When you look at a work of art, can you forget that you're a professional at this point? Can you see it as something other than a problem to be solved?

HASKELL: Well, this a very interesting problem. Of course, when I can do it is when I'm looking at art of a totally different civilization. If I'm looking at European things, somewhere, always at the back of my mind are questions: Am I getting it right? Is this early fifteenth century or late fifteenth century? It doesn't happen immediately, but it's always there, somewhere in my mind. In recent years, through travel, really, I've become extraordinarily fascinated by





Islamic art, about which I know absolutely nothing, and there I could get dates wrong by hundreds of years. One of the great pleasures of that was exactly the fact that these sorts of questions didn't pose themselves, and I didn't even think about whether the object was a fake, or if it was very much restored, or if it was fifteenth century or eighteenth century or anything else. I went to Japan once for a week, and to some extent that applies also to Japanese art. The only thing is I don't like Japanese art nearly as much as I like Islamic art. It's the last thing that has happened to me, or probably will happen to me, in terms of falling in love with objects rather than with people. If I was much younger and starting again, I would certainly want to know much more about it. But as I don't know anything about it now, these worries and anxieties completely vanish into thin air and I just think about how absolutely wonderful it is.

SMITH: But it doesn't push you to say, "Well, maybe I'll write about Islamic art"?

HASKELL: Over a drink or two I might be pushed, but then it vanishes. I hope it's not the first indication of Alzheimer's disease instead of just the natural process of aging, which is what the doctors keep saying it is, but what happens to me now in an alarming way, really, is that my memory gets worse and worse, so that although I do read guidebooks and catalogs and I try and think about these things a bit, I know perfectly well that I'll pretty quickly forget them. My



memory is still good when it has to be good, if you see what I mean, about seventeenth-century Italian things. I will remember the names of artists, where the pictures are, more or less what they look like and so on, but if it's something starting up now, like Islamic art, the answer is I know perfectly well I'll forget it and I may even forget that I've seen it. I'll forget whether it's in Cairo or Marrakesh.

SMITH: This is broader than most of the questions I've asked you, so you can decline to answer it. What are the values that you feel your work has been fighting for? I guess the question presupposes that you have values.

HASKELL: Well, I hope I've got values, but the trouble is, it's a question that's almost impossible to answer without being pretentious. If I talk about the Search for Truth, or something, I'll make an absolute idiot of myself. I suppose this isn't quite what you mean, but it's the only way I think I will try and answer this question. I can now see, in more or less every single book I've written that there has always been an attempt to reconcile two great interests of mine: one is history, the past, and the other is actually looking at history through art, you know, my being alive now, looking at the past. In one way or another every single book I've written has been about that. That isn't what you mean by "value," but I think it's the way I prefer answering the question, because otherwise I can only turn myself into a phoney.



SMITH: No, that's a perfectly fine answer. I certainly don't mean to put you on the spot in terms of pontificating about truth or justice.

HASKELL: No, that would be very difficult, but I think it really genuinely is true that I have got two great loves; one of them is art and the other is history.

SMITH: Is the passion to know what happened in the past motivated by anything other than just historical curiosity?

HASKELL: Well, I suppose if you were a psychoanalyst you could say all sorts of things about it. No doubt it's got something to do with my parents, but I don't know.

SMITH: You already told us that you weren't influenced by psychoanalytic thought.

HASKELL: I don't think I said I wasn't ever influenced by it, but I've never accepted it wholeheartedly. I hope I said that it was impossible to avoid it altogether; in other words, if Freud had never existed, obviously I would think about things in a different way. And that would be the case even if, as various letters to the *New York Review of Books* and elsewhere suggest, Freud is shown to have been a total cheat who falsified all the evidence. Even should that be the case, I still don't see how one could not remain influenced by him. So I certainly don't claim that I haven't been influenced by Freud, but I don't think I've ever accepted the whole Freudian hypothesis.





I'm sure this does play a part in my not following and even not liking or admiring, to be more honest still, a great deal of contemporary art, and this is a terribly damaging admission, which I certainly wouldn't want some people to see, but I think I'm being honest when I say one of the appeals of the art which I do particularly like is that it is in the past. This doesn't apply to things like cinema, but there wasn't cinema in the distant past. Somehow or other I do realize that the art that I do love does open a kind of alternative view of life and that is one that has gone and the art remains a sort of tangible link; this, in a way, was the motive of my last book—that illusory link.

In the preface for the Spanish edition of my book I was saying that although I challenge the way it's been done and I don't know myself how it can be done, the whole point of my book would be lost if, as some of its critics have said, it wasn't realized that I find this quest an enormously fascinating and interesting and worthwhile one, even if it is illusory, so to speak. If there's anything that upsets me about what people say about this book, it is the supposition that I'm dismissing the whole thing as worthless and the aim of what people do is worthless. I think the results have not proved what people set out to prove, and I can't do it myself. The book is about an unhappy love affair, if you see what I mean, but it is a love affair; it's not just a clinical report on why witchcraft happened, or the origins of anti-Semitism. Of course these are serious



historical topics, but my book is not that sort of book at all; it is a book about something I find enormously fascinating, appealing, intriguing and which influences me personally no end.

SMITH: I have colleagues in America for whom there are periods in the past, too, where they think if somehow we could for instance go back to the pragmatists at the turn of the century or go back to the common sense philosophers at the turn of the eighteenth century or the humanists . . . somehow things went in the wrong direction at a certain point. They recognize progress of course, so it's not a totalizing rejection of the modern world, but in some corner of the past, always the corner that they happen to study, there is some utopian vision for them. I'm not convinced it can be conveyed to anybody else, but it is a utopian vision, nonetheless, that motivates their work. Is there something along those lines at work with you in terms of your interest in the baroque period or the nineteenth century, or Coningham? Does the past involve an element of potential recovery?

HASKELL: Yes, I think that it does. Again, it would be very, very difficult to define, but I think that is true. We haven't discussed this, but it is terribly, terribly important for me I think in my work. There are two main historical problems that have faced me in almost everything I've written, and they're not new problems, but they do worry me no end. First of all, how do you judge



people in history? The thing I most dread in historical writing is being condescending to people who are dead, if you see what I mean, and judging them by present-day standards. You've no idea how much worry that gives me when I actually write. Does it make sense to say, going back to certain kinds of feminist history, that Shakespeare was a monster because the women in his plays get a raw deal? You're then arguing in a way that no one of Shakespeare's time could have remotely understood. Does it make sense to say popes in the sixteenth century who supported the Inquisition and had people burned alive as a result of their policies were cruel when this cruelty was a part of an acceptable fact of life? We now choose certain things and reject other things to blame about the past.

I reject what you might call the feminist criticism of the past. I regret the way the women were treated, and I'm not trying to say it was a good thing that women were treated badly, but I reject the idea that there's any purpose whatsoever in criticizing the civilization of the past because it didn't put women on the same basis as men, as is now attempted, but I suppose somehow or other I do accept the criticism of people in the past who were extremely cruel and burned people alive. Am I just being totally arbitrary in choosing what to accept and what to reject? I realize that people in the nineteenth century, for instance, accused people in the eighteenth century of sexual laxity, frivolousness, lechery,





and all the rest of it, and they'd just chosen that. Nowadays, people choose to point out the treatment of women or cruelty and so on. What elements of the past have we got any right to judge? That worries me enormously when I'm writing. Not so much concerning the treatment of women or about burning people at the stake, but about people who looked at works of art.

SMITH: If we can take the treatment of women as an example, we can look back to the seventeenth century and see that the Puritans, who in many respects have not represented a positive model for the contemporary world and who didn't treat woman as equals, nonetheless assumed that women had spiritual agency.

[Tape XI, Side One]

HASKELL: Yes, in the same way I think that we can colossally admire Montaigne when, in the sixteenth century, he does object to cruelty and to persecution. When we come across people who do this, I think we're absolutely right to single them out as heroes, but what I'm not quite sure about is, are we right to damn as villains people who didn't accept Montaigne's view of the world, because we are then damning most people of that time. It is true that in certain moments there was a recognition of women, and I think we're right to give that credit, but I'm not at all sure that it follows logically that we're then saying that people who didn't do that were wrong. I'm not sure it makes any more sense to think of them as being wrong than it is to say that Michelangelo



was wrong not to be an abstract painter, if you see what I mean. I know that that sounds absolutely farcical, but if you think of the way that opinions about Delacroix or Manet have changed, even since I began writing, when, for example, Manet was looked upon as a man who had no interest whatsoever in what he was painting, as if he were an abstract, sort of 1940s painter. Until very recently both Manet and Delacroix were looked upon as people who were absolutely longing to be abstract painters, but they were constrained by a bourgeois, philistine society that insisted on having dull subjects.

SMITH: That's quite common; one reads that about El Greco, or Rubens, or Rembrandt.

HASKELL: Absolutely. This is what worries me about how to approach the past, exactly this sort of problem, and similarly some of the antiquarians I discuss in *History and Its Images* say things that in the light of present-day knowledge sound absolutely absurd.

SMITH: Part of our job is to explain why rational men and women would believe such things.

HASKELL: Of course, there I agree with you 100 percent. I totally accept that, but I don't think there's much point in just damning them as wrong, and this is what I do object to in what you might call the new art history—blaming artists because they were working for a corrupt aristocracy as opposed to working for

The first of these is the fact that the  
government has been unable to  
maintain a stable currency for  
the past several years. This has  
led to a loss of confidence in  
the government and a consequent  
loss of support for its policies.  
The second is the fact that the  
government has been unable to  
maintain a stable economy for  
the past several years. This has  
led to a loss of confidence in  
the government and a consequent  
loss of support for its policies.  
The third is the fact that the  
government has been unable to  
maintain a stable society for  
the past several years. This has  
led to a loss of confidence in  
the government and a consequent  
loss of support for its policies.

the people. One of the things, for instance, that very sensible people often say, is that painters somehow let down their art or their people by not painting factories. What was happening in the nineteenth century that was really important was the development of industrial civilization and the factories, so why didn't painters paint factory workers instead of happy peasants in fields? The answer is they didn't paint factory workers because obviously no one wanted to hang a picture of a factory on their walls, and painters were working in those circumstances. A lot of people just think that painters should have reflected what was new in society, and this I think is absolutely misreading the situation.

SMITH: Right, but you do have the case of someone like Maximilien Luce, who did paint factories and did it quite well.

HASKELL: Absolutely. I completely agree and I do give lectures in which I talk about Maximilien Luce in this way, because it was about that time that artists were changing the whole notion of patronage. I give lectures on the "avant-garde," and my argument, for what it's worth, is that "avant-garde" ought to be as strictly applicable a term as "romantic" or "impressionism" or "neo-classical," and the idea that throughout history there have been avant-gardes, I think, is absolute, total nonsense. I think there was something that can be called the avant-garde which began around 1880 and ended around 1940, and since then it hasn't existed at all. This doesn't mean to say there aren't contemporary painters





who might be very good, but I don't think they are avant-garde.

SMITH: That sounds very much like Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, with almost the same dating, though he would, I think, talk in terms of 1860 rather than 1880.

HASKELL: I haven't read that, but I think there's a fundamental difference there. I think in 1860 there was no avant-garde and I think in 1880 there was.

SMITH: Talking about the avant-garde raises the question of the definition of terms and how one fights this battle of getting terms to be used in a more rigorous way.

HASKELL: Yes, it does, and I'm glad that many people do agree with me on that, but I think it's a losing battle. I don't think I will change anyone's views about it much, except perhaps pupils who come to talks I give on this. I do feel that a great deal of harm is done certainly to thought and judgment, but possibly also to artists themselves, by the belief that throughout history there always has been an avant-garde and it is a good thing that there was. I think, in a way, it's a disastrous idea that there should always be an avant-garde. By which I absolutely say at once that I don't mean that the art that was produced during this period wasn't very often wonderful art. I think Seurat, Gauguin, and then Matisse were all very great painters. I don't mean that the art was disastrous, but I do think that the circumstances which did occur were disastrous for art. I think one is



perfectly legitimate to assume that just because circumstances in barbarian times or the late Dark Ages were clearly disastrous and people were getting killed, a great deal of wonderful art was produced there, but it doesn't follow that one should try and reproduce those things. I think it would be rather worrying if people thought that because of the wonderful quality of certain kinds of late antique art during the Dark Ages it would be a thoroughly good thing if every now and then half the churches were burned down and had to be rebuilt again. No one thinks that, but a lot of people do think that because a lot of great artists were ignored during their lifetimes and during their early days, that this somehow or other is a necessary product for art, and as a consequence you get people chasing that theory and you have the absolutely farcical situation where *Life* magazine features on their cover this "great neglected artist," if you see what I mean. That's the kind of situation which I do think leads to total absurdity.

SMITH: Before we close, if you have anything further that you'd like to add, please go ahead. Perhaps there were other questions I should have asked.

HASKELL: You've been immensely patient and exhaustive. As you've said, when I do read the transcript I may then suddenly feel, "Oh my God. Why didn't I say this?" and then I gather I am allowed to add comments, so I think that would be the right moment to do that because, apart from anything else, I've forgotten half the things I have told you already. I don't know if I've been



repeating myself endlessly or whether or not I've forgotten things.

SMITH: You haven't been repeating yourself. Okay, well then, we'll stop here.





## INDEX

- Acton, Harold, 72  
 Adhémar, Jean, 136  
 Alsop, Joseph, 340-341  
 Altman, Benjamin, 102-103  
 Annan, Noel, 31-32, 126, 241  
 Antal, Frederick, 94-95, 97  
 Anti-Semitism, 12-13, 17  
 Apostles, the, 115-124, 260, 285  
 Argan, Giulio Carlo, 325  
 Ashmolean Museum, 131-134, 139,  
     141, 148, 150, 257, 306, 310  
 Association of British Art Historians,  
     154  
 Auden, W.H., 198-99
- Bacon, Francis, 20  
 Baglione, Giovanni, 99  
 Bailey, Colin, 313  
 Bakst, Leon, 306  
 Barocchi, Paola, 68-69  
 Barr, Alfred, 183-184  
 Barrault, Jean-Louis, 24  
 Beauvoir, Simone de, 61  
 Bell, Clive, 14  
 Bellori, Gian Petro, 99  
 Berenson, Bernard, 65, 102, 235,  
     330  
 Berlin, Isaiah, 135, 232, 340  
 Betjeman, John, 75  
 Bettagno, Alessandro, 289-290  
 Bevan, Aneurin, 45  
 Bibliothèque Nationale, 161, 328  
 Blunt, Anthony, 25, 47-48, 66, 76,  
     115, 120-121, 325, 326, 328  
 Boime, Albert, 183, 195  
 Botticelli, Sandro, 51, 103, 223-224
- Bouguereau, Adolphe-William, 178,  
     179, 181, 193  
 Bowra, C.M., 135  
 Braque, Georges, 197  
 Briganti, Giuliano, 68, 328  
 Brown, Carter, 281  
 Brown, Jonathan, 191  
 Buckle, Henry Thomas, 232-233,  
     270  
 Burckhardt, Jacob, 52-53, 214, 228,  
     231  
 Bürger, Peter, 355  
 Burgess, Guy, 121  
 Butterfield, Herbert, 33
- Cabanel, Alexandre, 178  
 Cailleux, Jean, 299  
 Calvocoressi, Peter, 317  
 Camus, Albert, 61  
 Cannadine, David, 62  
 Caravaggio, 71-72  
 Castelnovo, Enrico, 161  
 Causa, Raffaello, 67-68  
 Chamberlain, Neville, 14-15  
 Chastel, André, 85-87, 325, 327,  
     328, 329  
 Churchill, Winston, 15, 45  
 Clark, Kenneth, 76-77, 90, 139  
 Clark, T.J., 152-153  
 Collingwood, R.G., 269-270  
 Colvin, Howard, 129, 258  
 Communist Party (Italy), 83  
 Comte, Auguste, 232  
 Coningham, William, 334-335  
 Courtauld Institute, 47-48, 74,  
     125-126, 140, 148, 151, 154,  
     239, 326



Couture, Thomas, 178, 193  
Croce, Benedetto, 83, 270

Daladier, Edouard, 6  
Darwin, Charles, 31, 241  
Delaissé, L.M.J., 130  
Delaroche, Paul, 195  
Demidoff, Anatole, 278, 334  
Detroit Institute of Arts, 205  
Dickens, Charles, 64  
Dobroklonski, Mikhail, 303-304,  
307  
Dvořák, Max, 75

Elek, Paul, 188  
Eliot, George, 31, 64, 160, 198, 241  
Epstein, Sir Jacob, 7  
Ettlinger, Leopold, 261-262  
Existentialism, 60-61  
Eyles, John, 20

Fellini, Federico, 197  
Ficino, Marsilio, 51  
Fleming, John, 286-287  
Focillon, Henri, 84  
Forster, E.M., 8, 32, 34-38, 57,  
107-108, 111, 115-116, 119-120,  
126, 179, 186  
Foucault, Michel, 160-161, 168,  
169, 227, 232  
Fredericksen, Burton, 105  
Freud, Sigmund, 52, 57, 58, 170,  
348  
Fry, Roger, 14, 35, 267, 268  
Furet, François, 322

Georgel, Pierre, 105  
Géricault, Théodore, 187  
Gérôme, Jean-Léon, 178, 179, 181,  
194

Getty Center for the History of Art  
and the Humanities, 90

Gibbon, Edward, 169, 217, 233  
Goldner, George, 105  
Gombrich, E.H., 51, 55, 66, 73, 95,  
127, 174-175, 176, 177, 185-187,  
196, 219, 228, 229, 246, 259,  
260, 261, 266, 267-268, 326  
Gramsci, Antonio, 83  
Guillaumin, Armand, 22

Hampshire, Stuart, 258  
Haskell, Arnold (father), 1-3, 5,  
6-8, 11, 13-14, 18, 20  
Haskell, Vera Saitzoff (mother), 1,  
3-4, 14  
Heaney, Seamus, 198  
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,  
118, 228, 231  
Hibbert, Arthur, 31  
*History and Its Images*, 97, 142,  
152, 159, 160, 211-220, 222,  
229, 236, 241, 268, 270, 274,  
275, 319, 349, 353  
Hobsbawm, Eric, 83-84  
Hogarth, William, 95  
Honour, Hugh, 286-287  
Hope, Charles, 50-51, 162-163,  
164, 311  
Huizinga, Johan, 217-218

Jaffé, David, 105  
Jaffe, Michael, 238, 335  
Janson, H.W., 328  
Jouvet, Louis, 24  
J. Paul Getty Trust, 103-105

Kaegi, Werner, 231  
Kahn, Louis, 199  
Kant, Immanuel, 118



- Keynes, John Maynard, 116, 122  
 Kitzinger, Ernst, 137  
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 292, 295–296, 299  
 Kurz, Otto, 137–138, 247, 259–261  
 Labour Party (British), 38–39, 70, 108, 114, 200  
 Laclotte, Michel, 328, 333  
 Larkin, Philip, 198  
 Laslett, Peter, 33–34  
 Lavin, Irving, 327  
 Leavis, F.R., 63–64  
 Levi, Anthony, 136  
 Longhi, Roberto, 66, 70–71, 78, 325  
 Lorrain, Claude, 279  
 Luce, Maximilien, 354  
 Mahon, Dennis, 90  
 Malpass, Gillian, 319  
 Malraux, André, 329–330  
 Manet, Edouard, 78  
 Marabotti, Alessandro Marabottini, 67, 70  
 Marxism, 52, 54, 56, 57, 66, 70, 76, 83–84, 94, 95, 96, 104, 152–153, 170–171, 176  
 Matisse, Henri, 197  
 McWilliam, Neil, 313  
 Meier, Richard, 199  
 Meiss, Millard, 245, 325, 327  
 Meissonier, Ernest, 179  
 Meltzoff, Stanley, 189  
 Michaelis, Adolf, 165  
 Michelet, Jules, 176, 217  
 Mill, John Stuart, 232–233, 241  
 Miller, Jonathan, 59, 60  
 Momigliano, Arnaldo, 75–76, 159, 212  
 Monet, Claude, 80  
 Moreno, Margeurite, 24  
 Morris, William, 202  
 Mussolini, Benito, 78  
 Namier, Lewis, 52, 96, 269  
 Nicoll, John, 317–318  
 Nicolson, Benedict, 65, 92–94, 122–123, 294–295, 316–317, 331, 332–333  
 Panofsky, Erwin, 50, 75, 162  
 Pascoli, Lione, 99  
 Passavant, Johann David, 227  
 Pater, Walter, 267, 268  
*Patrons and Painters*, 46, 54, 65, 93–94, 141, 174–175, 178–179, 180, 221, 244, 275, 277, 316, 336  
 Pears, Iain, 312–313  
 Penny, Nicholas, 167, 205, 206–208, 211, 214, 277  
 Petit, Roland, 23  
 Pevsner, Nikolaus, 40–41, 42–43, 49, 65–66, 127, 234–235, 236–237, 244, 245–246, 263  
 Picasso, Pablo, 197  
 Pignatti, Teresio, 67  
 Pintard, Rene, 159  
 Pirri, Padre, 100  
 Plato, 51, 118  
 Plimpton, George, 107  
 Pollock, Griselda, 158  
 Pollock, Jackson, 80, 182  
 Pocock, J.G.A., 62  
 Popper, Karl, 55  
 Poussin, Nicolas, 66  
 Proust, Marcel, 58  
 Ragghianti, Carlo, 325  
 Raven, Simon, 28–29, 40, 117  
 Read, Herbert, 184







*Rediscoveries in Art*, 77, 90, 103,  
142, 177, 189-191, 196, 221,  
222, 268, 317, 323-324, 335

Riegl, Alois, 50, 75, 267

Rogers, Samuel, 319

Rose, Jasper, 29

Rosen, Charles, 185

Rosenberg, Pierre, 326, 328

Rosenblum, Robert, 182, 310

Rostow, Walt, 240

Rothko, Mark, 182

Rubin, William, 161

Runciman, W.G., 60

Ruskin, John, 202, 235, 267, 268,  
338

Russell, Bertrand, 34

Russian Revolution, 242

Rylands, G.H.W., 30, 64, 87-89

Sadler, Michael, 7

Said, Edward, 156

Salmina, Larissa (wife), 88, 92, 93,  
287-288, 289-309

Sartre, Jean-Paul, 23, 61

Sauerländer, Willibald, 328

Saxl, Fritz, 247

Schama, Simon, 216

Schapiro, Meyer, 79-80, 185-186,  
327

Schmarsow, August, 75

Scruton, Roger, 233

Seznec, Jean, 84, 135-136, 253-254

Shackleton, Robert, 136

Shakespeare, William, 250-251

Shuttleworth, Martin, 30, 44, 64,  
111-112

Sieveking, Gail, 41

Skinner, Quentin, 62-63

Smith, Alan Caiger, 29, 40

Sparrow, John, 254-256

Stangos, Nick, 210

Starobinski, Jean, 161

Stone, Lawrence, 168, 213-214

Summerson, John, 74, 76, 77, 265

Tanner, Tony, 60

*Taste and the Antique*, 142, 167,  
205-210, 222

Thuillier, Jacques, 326, 328

Tiepolo, Giovanni Battista, 71-72,  
141, 174-175, 292, 307

Titian, 105, 163

Togliatti, Palmiro, 83

Toledo Art Museum, 205

Townley, Charles, 167

Toynbee, Philip, 93, 122-123

Trevelyan, George Macaulay, 62

Turner, Joseph, 80

Vaughan, Gerard, 164-166, 167,  
311

Velázquez, Diego, 78, 80, 161, 236

Venturi, Franco, 46

Venturi, Leonello, 66, 70-71, 325

Victoria and Albert Museum, 149,  
306

Voltaire, 233

Waagen, Gustav Friedrich, 148, 227

Wackernagel, Martin, 96

Wallace Collection, 188, 278-280,  
334

Warburg, Aby, 229

Warburg Institute (London), 49, 50,  
73-75, 76, 87, 162, 180, 243, 251

Waterhouse, Ellis, 89-92, 220

Watkin, David, 75, 82, 209

Watson, Francis, 188, 287-288

Wells, H.G., 176

White, Christopher, 287



Whiteley, Jon, 150, 194, 310  
Wilde, Johannes, 125  
Wildenstein, Georges, 85-86  
Wilkes, Tim, 311-312  
Williams, Raymond, 63, 64  
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 168,  
211  
Wind, Edgar, 49, 63, 246-252,  
253-259, 264  
Wind, Margaret, 253-254  
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 34  
Wittkower, Margot, 262-263  
Wittkower, Rudolf, 49, 70,  
244-245, 246, 247, 248, 251,  
259, 263-265, 326  
Wölfflin, Heinrich, 50, 75, 96,  
175-176, 223  
Woolf, Leonard, 116  
Woolf, Virginia, 122  
World War II, 4-6, 10-11, 14-17,  
19, 21, 26-27, 38-39  
Wrightsmann Lectures, 189-192, 317,  
322  
Wrigley, Richard, 312  
  
Yates, Frances, 77-78  
  
Zeri, Federico, 68  
Zerner, Henri, 81, 185, 195









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